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ANCIENT  
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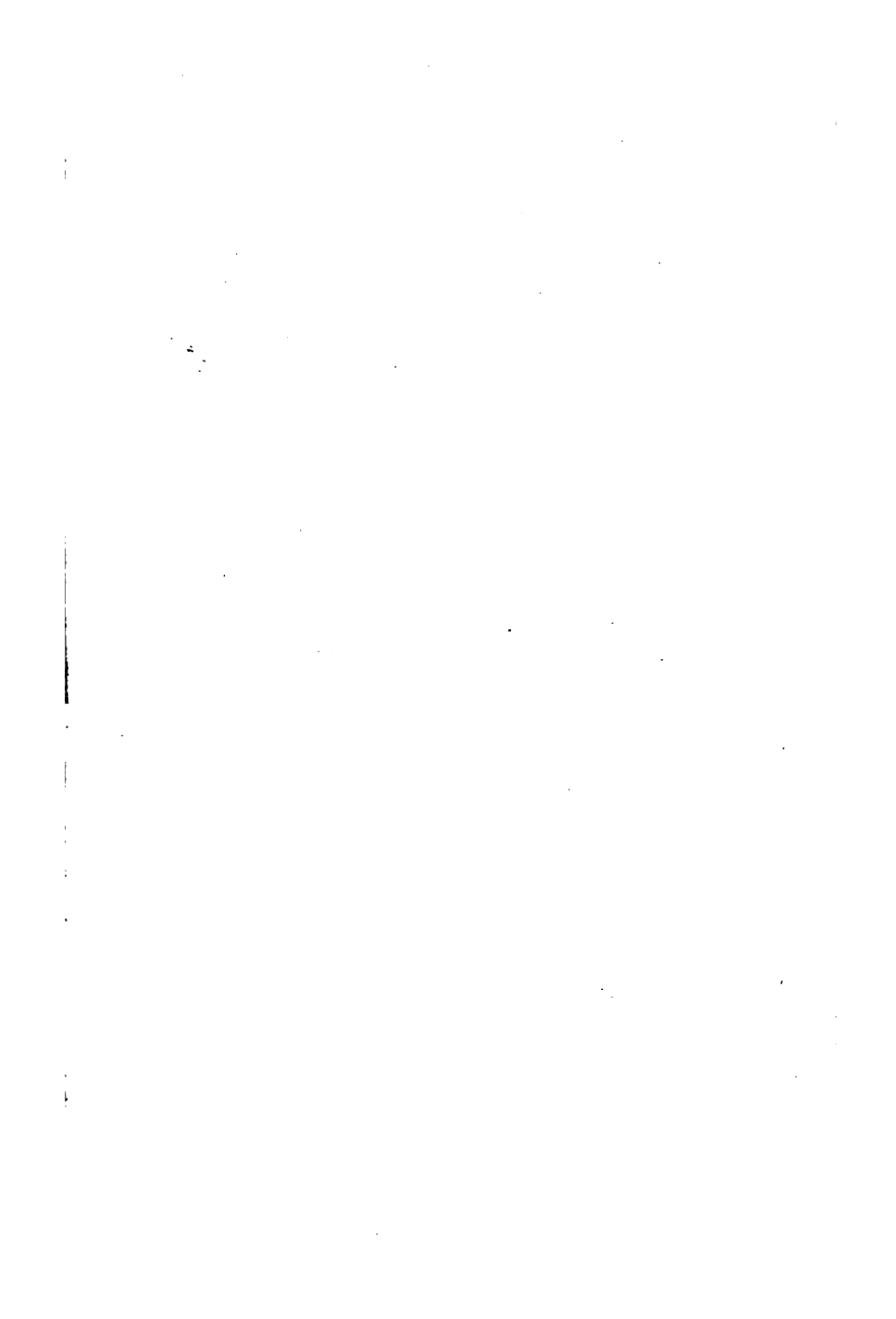
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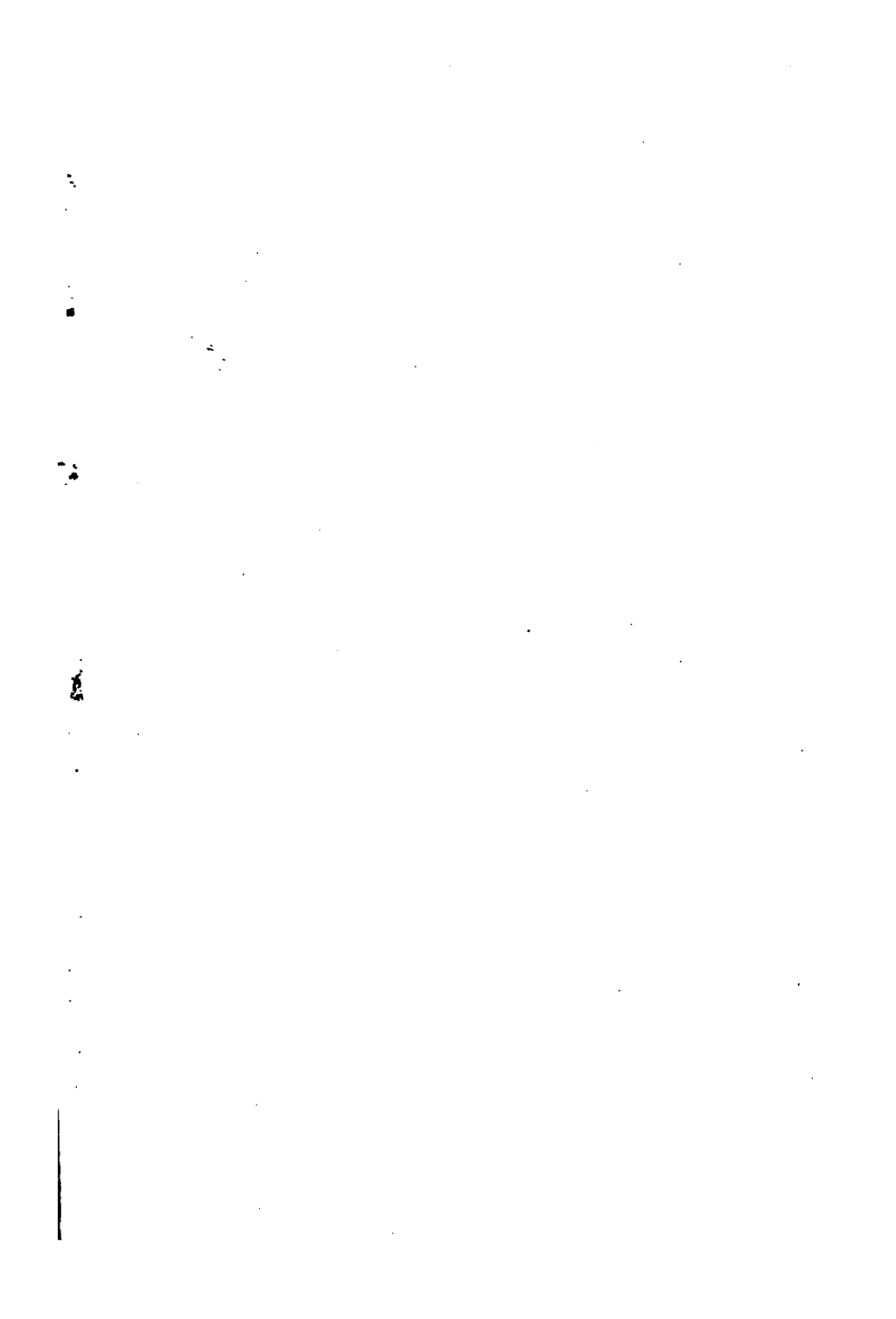
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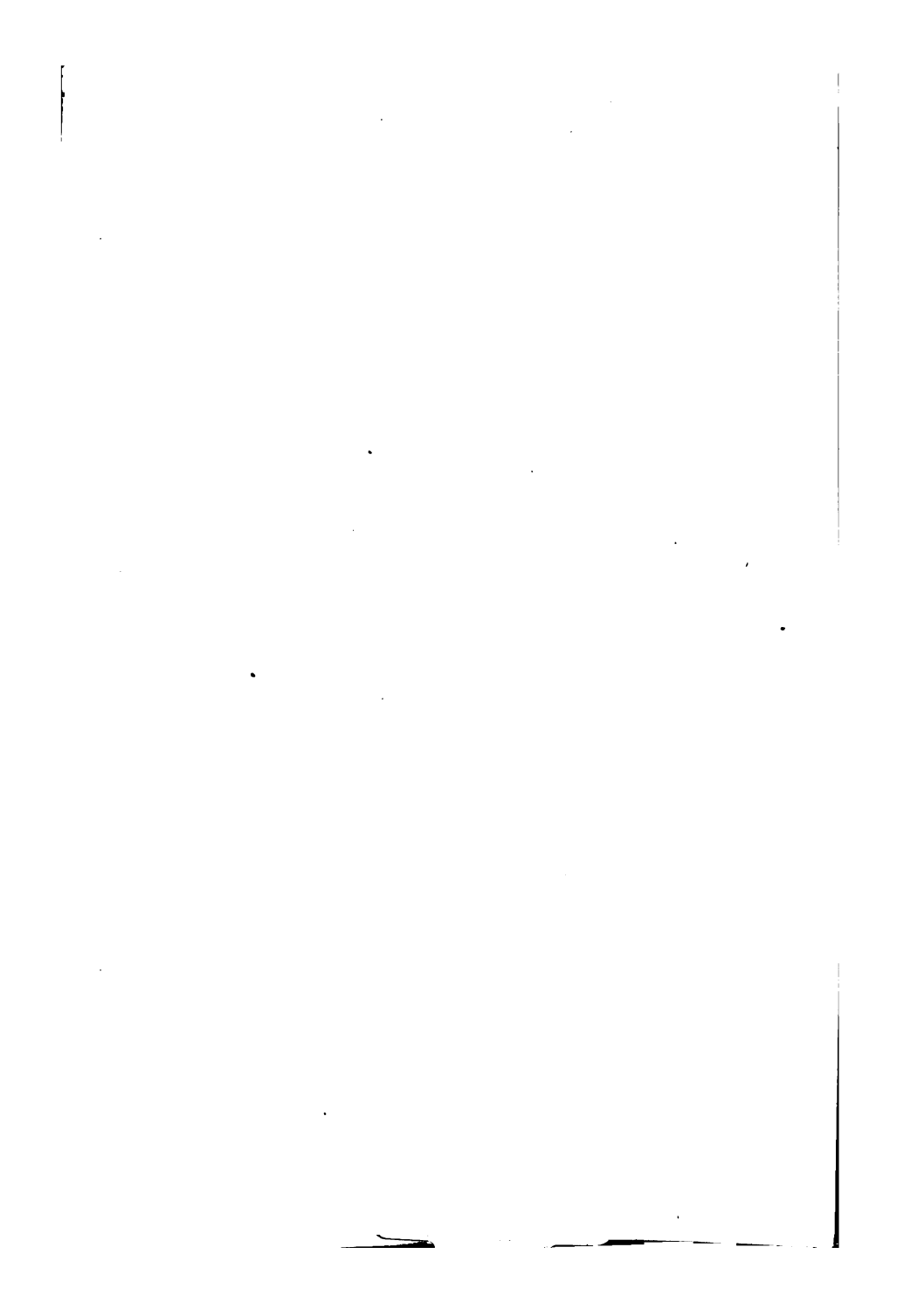
# TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS

EDITED BY

A. F. NIGHTINGALE, PH. D.

SUPERINTENDENT OF HIGH SCHOOLS, CHICAGO









SAMUEL T. COLERIDGE.

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TWENTIETH CENTURY TEXT-BOOKS

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# THE ANCIENT MARINER AND OTHER POEMS

BY

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND WITH  
NOTES TO THE ANCIENT MARINER

BY

PELHAM EDGAR, Ph. D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF FRENCH IN VICTORIA COLLEGE,  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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## PREFATORY NOTE

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THE present edition of *The Ancient Mariner* is designed to conform with the needs of secondary schools throughout the United States. A reference to the table of contents will indicate the system of arrangement adopted. The editor has sought to present a simple and succinct idea of Coleridge, the man, and Coleridge, the poet. The account of the literary conditions prior to Coleridge's time is really essential to an appreciation of his most famous poem, and could not consistently be omitted. The footnotes should be sufficient for the understanding of the poem, but the appended notes will be found useful for more extended work. The student should make particular reference to the outline of the poem presented in these appended notes at the beginning of each section. The footnotes refer him besides to other notes of special importance.

Certain other characteristic and beautiful poems of Coleridge are included in this book, but it was thought preferable to leave them unannotated.

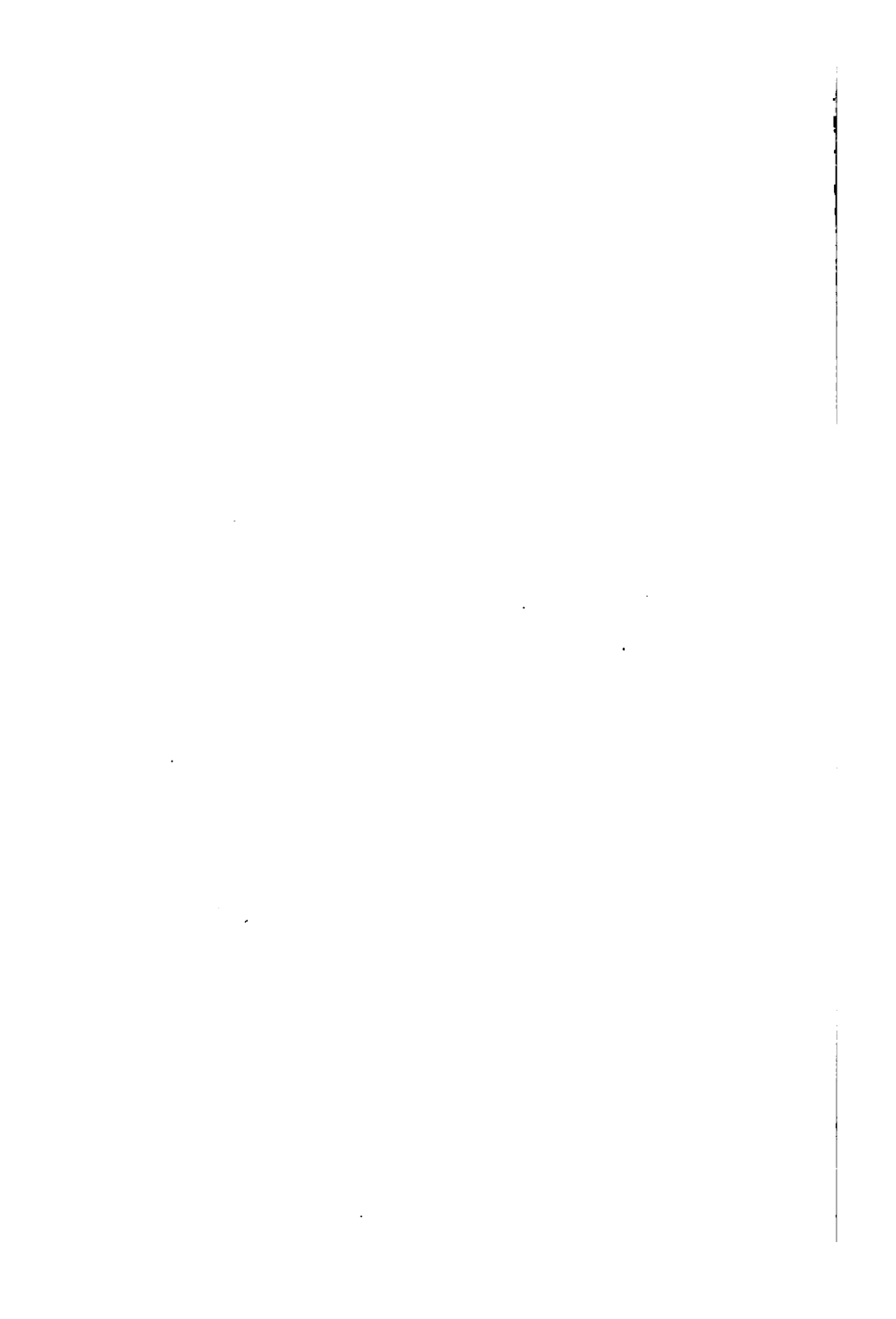


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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, born at Ottery St. Mary, October 21, 1772; died at Highgate, July 25, 1834.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born at Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, on the 21st of October, 1772.

His father, the Rev. John Coleridge, the vicar and schoolmaster of the place, had

Childhood and youth.

conquered his small position in the world by dint of hard and faithful work. He had been twice married, and the poet was the youngest of a family of thirteen children. The only characteristic trait which Coleridge can be said to have inherited from his father was a certain intellectual pedantry, which manifested itself in later years by the outlandish titles which he assigned to works not destined to advance in many instances beyond the title-page.\* So we find in the worthy vicar's *Critical Latin Grammar* a proposed change in the nomenclature of the cases, whereby the ablative was to receive the expressive name of the *quippe-quare-quale-quia-quidditive case*. It is also told of him that he was wont to harangue his simple congregation in the original Hebrew, as being the "immediate language of the Holy Ghost." They considered his successor as wanting in piety for abandoning this practice.

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\* For example, "Consolations and Comforts from the exercise and right application of the Reason, the Imagination, and the Moral Feelings, addressed especially to those in Sickness, Adversity, or Distress of Mind, from Speculative Gloom, etc."

The poet's mother, Anne Bowdon, was a practical-minded woman, of no marked ability of any kind, but thoroughly determined that all her sons should receive the education of gentlemen. The father had frequently announced his intention of apprenticing them to various trades; so Mrs. Coleridge perhaps conferred upon the world a poet, and saved it from an incompetent blacksmith.

Our knowledge of Coleridge's childhood is derived entirely from his autobiographical letters to Thomas Poole, written in 1797.\* That he was unlike other boys need scarcely be said. From his earliest years he was an omnivorous reader, and led captive by an imagination which seized upon and magnified whatever he read. "My father's sister kept an *everything* shop at Crediton, and there I read through all the gilt-cover little books that could be had at that time, and likewise all the uncovered tales of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-killer, etc. And I used to lie by the wall and *mope*, and my spirits used to come upon me suddenly; and in a flood of them I was accustomed to race up and down the churchyard, and act over all I had been reading, on the docks, the nettles, and the rank grass," cutting them down, as he elsewhere says, "like one of the Seven Champions of Christendom." "So I became a *dreamer*, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity; and I was fretful and inordinately passionate, and as I could not play at anything and was slothful, I was despised and hated by the boys; and because I could read and spell, and had, I may truly say, a memory and understanding forced into almost an unnatural ripeness, I was flattered and wondered at by all the old women. And so I became very vain, and despised most of the

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\* Poems referring to his boyhood are the following: *Sonnet to the River Otter*; *Lines to a Beautiful Spring in a Village*; *Frost at Midnight*; *Lines Composed in a Concert Room*, and other stray verses.

boys that were at all near my own age, and before I was eight years old I was a *character*. Sensibility, imagination, vanity, sloth, and feelings of deep and bitter contempt for all who traversed the orbit of my understanding, were even then prominent and manifest."

Coleridge's father died in 1781, and the following year Mr. Francis Buller obtained for the boy a presenta-

tion to Christ's Hospital, the famous London charity school.\* Here, then, in September, 1782, Coleridge was installed, and the great grim school remained his home for nine years almost without a break. Although it is possible that he may have occasionally visited his home in the interval, there are no reliable records of this until 1791.†

His chief instructor was the famous Boyer, a disciplinarian of the old school. He used sometimes, the poet says, to lay on an extra stroke with the explanatory words, "You are such an ugly rascal." Despite these flogging propensities Coleridge seems not to have disliked him, and his teaching at least must have been thoroughly sound. His literary taste was perhaps too exclusively conservative, for in the school library which he established was to be found neither Spenser, Chatterton, nor Cowper, names soon to be revered by the young romantic school. However, among the Greek and Latin classics his discernment was admirable,‡ and Coleridge, as a testimony to the general soundness of his judgment, records the caustic humor with which he assailed violations of taste in the poetic exercises of the

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\* Of descriptive interest are two essays of Charles Lamb: *Recollections of Christ's Hospital* and *Christ's Hospital Five-and-thirty Years Ago*.

† See Coleridge's poem *To the Rev. George Coleridge*, ll. 17 f., and cf. the "poor friendless boy" of Lamb's above-mentioned essay (the latter one).

‡ See *Biographia Literaria*, chap. i (Harper's edition, p. 147).

class. "Harp? Harp? Lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, muse? Your nurse's daughter you mean! Pierian spring? Oh aye! the cloister-pump, I suppose!"

At fifteen Coleridge, in a capricious fit, sought to become apprenticed to a cobbler, and even induced the latter to interview Boyer for the purpose. The result was unpleasant for the cobbler, and Coleridge remained at school. Shortly afterward his brother Luke came up to walk the London Hospital, and this diverted the young Coleridge to a passionate zeal for medicine. This in turn "gave way to a rage for metaphysics. . . . After I had read Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary* I sported infidel; but my infidel vanity never touched my heart." Boyer saw fit to remove this folly by a flogging—"the only just one," Coleridge used to say, which he ever received from his master.

He still continued to be an inordinate reader, and, as he confessed, devoured the contents of a circulating library to which a strange chance gave him access. The story is characteristic enough to be true. He was walking in a crowded street, imitating with his arms the motion of swimming. His hand came in contact with an old gentleman's pocket, who turned round sharply to seize the thief. Coleridge timidly explained that he thought that he was Leander swimming across the Hellespont. The answer was apparently satisfactory, and Coleridge benefited, as we have said, by the gift of a subscription to the library.

Infidel literature seems now to have been superseded by works of a mystical character, such as Taylor's translation of the Neoplatonic writer Plotinus. It is to this period in Coleridge's life that Lamb's often-quoted and high-flown description must apply: "Come back into my memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy

fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, logician, metaphysician, bard! How have I seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration . . . to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar, while the walls of the old Gray Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity boy*.”

Coleridge was roused from his metaphysical fit by two circumstances. At the age of sixteen he became boyishly interested in a certain Mary Evans. Shortly afterward, in October, 1789, his friend Middleton sent to him a copy of Bowles's sonnets. The Mary Evans episode seems to have ripened by degrees into a warm attachment, and Coleridge's most competent biographer, the late James Dykes Campbell, attributes to his unsatisfied hopes the subsequent unhappiness of the poet's married life. The effect of Bowles's poetry upon him deserves our closer attention.

In the life of every child of genius there seems to come a moment of special revelation, when the future flashes upon his inward vision, and resolutions are formed which influence his whole career. At first sight it would appear a very ironical thing that the turning point in Coleridge's life should be marked by the chance encounter of Bowles's poetry. Cowper or Burns would have surely served the purpose better; but he was not familiar with their work until a later period, when his own theories of poetry were already firmly fixed. And what shall we say of Bowles's poems? To any one who now has the curiosity to read them they seem mediocre and insipid even. But we have been fed on stronger diet,

*Sonnets of  
Bowles.*

and have had the privilege of reading Coleridge himself and the remarkable group of poets who surrounded him. In his *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge tells us (Chapter I) how repugnant to his taste and better judgment the poetry of the school of Pope had become; and Bowles, though sometimes erring upon the side of artificiality, possessed a native freshness and a genuine love for Nature which were foreign entirely to the narrower classical spirit, and seemed to the young Coleridge the promise of a new dawn in poetry. We know that other forces much more powerful were working for the liberation of the spirit of poetry,\* yet Coleridge, with his limited access to contemporary works, thought that he had made a discovery of the first importance. He confesses to having written at least forty manuscript copies of the sonnets for distribution among his friends.

Coleridge's school days were drawing to a close. He had been elected a Grecian in 1788, which implied that his scholarship had already attracted attention. On the 12th of January, 1791, he was appointed an exhibitor at Jesus College, Cambridge. His "discharge" from the school bears the date of September 7, 1791. In the following month he went into residence at Cambridge, 1791-1794. Jesus, became a pensioner on November 5, and matriculated on March 26, 1792. These are meager facts to record, but they present nearly all that is known of Coleridge's university career. He received slight emoluments from his Christ's Hospital

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\* The important books of the eighteenth century, to bear in mind as influencing poetry in new directions, are the following: 1760-'65, Macpherson's *Ossian*; 1764-'70, Chatterton's *Poems* (greatly admired by Coleridge); 1765, Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry*; 1772-'78, Warton's *History of English Poetry*; 1775-'78, Tyrwhitt's *Chaucer*; 1785, Cowper's *Task*; 1786, Burns's *Poems*; 1798, *Lyrical Ballads*, by Coleridge and Wordsworth.

Exhibition, and from a Rustat scholarship gained after going up to the university. He was also very proud of winning in his first year a gold medal for a Sapphic ode upon the slave trade. In the following year he failed to gain any honors. In December, 1794, he left Cambridge without taking a degree.

Coleridge's life at Cambridge, apart from its academic side, was not without curious incidents. At the close of 1793, whether from debts or disappointed love, the poet fled from Cambridge, and, with the capriciousness of a true son of genius, enlisted under the name of Silias Tomkyn Comberbach in the Fifteenth, or King's Regiment of Light Dragoons. It was a sorry farce. No more unsoldierlike figure ever tumbled from a horse than Coleridge. His duties bewildered him; but by dint of nursing his sick comrades, writing letters for the more ignorant, and recounting to them amazing stories of Alexander and his conquest of the world, he managed, with their willing assistance offered in return, to keep himself and horse tolerably respectable. Wearying of his uncongenial employment, Coleridge seems to have revealed his whereabouts in a letter to a school friend, who in turn communicated the intelligence to his brothers. As a result of their efforts Coleridge was bought out and received his discharge in April, 1794. He returned a penitent to Cambridge, where he was publicly admonished by the Master in the presence of the Fellows. The story is evidently untrustworthy which ascribes Coleridge's discharge to the personal intervention of his captain. The latter, it is said, had chanced to observe the following inscription scrawled by Coleridge on the stable walls, *Eheu! quam infortunii miserrimum est fuisse felicem*. This led him to make inquiries as to the former condition of the trooper, with the above-mentioned result.

Enlistment in  
the dragoons.



In June Coleridge decided to visit an old school friend at Oxford. It was here that Southey and Coleridge first came together, and it was here that the very boyish and very romantic scheme of pantisocracy was spontaneously hatched.

Meeting with  
Southey, June,  
1794.

Much has been written of this curious episode in their lives. Briefly the plan was as follows, quoting in part from a letter of Thomas Poole:\* "Twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles are to embark with twelve ladies in April next" for some "delightful part of the new back settlements" of America. The labor of each man for two or three hours a day was to suffice for the support of the colony. The produce was to be common property; there was to be a good library; and the frequent leisure hours were to be employed in study, discussion, and in the education of the children after a settled system. The women were to devote themselves to taking care of the infant children and other suitable occupations, not neglecting the cultivation of their minds. It was not yet determined "whether the marriage contract shall be dissolved, if agreeable to one or both parties." Every one was "to enjoy his own religious and political opinions, provided they do not encroach on the rules previously made. . . . They calculate that every gentleman providing £125 will be sufficient to carry the scheme into execution."

The banks of the Susquehanna were selected as a suitable locality, partly because of the pretty name, and in part because of the security it afforded "from hostile Indians and bisons." They were assured that literary characters made money there, "and the mosquitoes are not so bad as our gnats." This sounds chimerical

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\* Thomas Poole and his Friends, I. 96-99.

enough, as indeed it proved to be. Practical difficulties soon arose, not, however, in the matter of obtaining wives, for Coleridge and Southey had secured the amiable consent of two of the Misses Fricker, while Lovell, a fellow-pantisocrat, had disposed of the third. The trouble from the outset was a pecuniary one; and when about a year later Southey showed his native common sense by withdrawing from the movement, it abruptly fizzled out and died.

It certainly deserved to die; and if there is something pathetic in this overthrow of early hopes, there is something still more ironical in the reflection that as years went on Coleridge and Southey, the youthful hot-heads of revolt, should have settled into ruts of the most rigid conservatism. Let us remember, however, that at the period of which we write revolutionary ideas were in the very air men breathed. The conservative Wordsworth of middle life has told us eloquently enough in *The Prelude* how he too caught from France the universal contagion. Coleridge in after days saw the abundant folly of this visionary scheme, but in a passage from his later writings \* he attaches a peculiar value to it in relation to his intellectual development. "Strange fancies, and as vain as strange! Yet to the intense interest and impassioned zeal, which called forth and strained every faculty of my intellect for the organization and defense of this scheme, I owe much of whatever I at present possess, my clearest insight into the nature of individual man, and my most comprehensive views of his social relations, of the true uses of trade and commerce, and how far the wealth and relative power of nations promote or impede their welfare and inherent strength. Nor were they less serviceable in

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\* *The Friend*, Section I, Essay VI.

securing myself, and perhaps some others, from the pitfalls of sedition; and when we at length alighted on the firm ground of common sense from the gradually exhausted balloon of youthful enthusiasm, though the air-built castles which we had been pursuing had vanished with all their pageantry of shifting forms and glowing colors, we were yet free from the stains and impurities which might have remained upon us had we been traveling with a crowd of less imaginative malcontents, through the dark lanes and foul byroads of ordinary fanaticism."

The first literary fruit of this revolutionary ardor was the *Fall of Robespierre*, a rhetorical drama written conjointly by Southey and Coleridge, and published as Coleridge's at Cambridge in September, 1794. During the summer, as has been said, he became engaged to Miss Sarah Fricker, not a little to Southey's astonishment, "because he had talked of being deeply in love with a certain Mary Evans." He returned to Cambridge after the summer vacation, but left somewhat precipitately in the middle of December, 1794, without taking a degree.

Leaves

Cambridge, December, 1794.

He did not, however, go to his *fiancée* or to Southey in Bristol, but to London, where he and his old school-fellow, Lamb, held royal cheer and converse at the sign of the Cat and Salutation. "Coleridge did not come back to Bristol," wrote Southey to the publisher Cottle, "till January, 1795, nor would he, I believe, have come back at all if I had not gone to London to look for him. For having got there from Cambridge at the beginning of winter, there he remained without writing to Miss Fricker or me."

The runaway, to the misfortune of himself and his future wife, was restored by the ever-watchful Southey, and with Burnett, the pantisocrat, they established

themselves in lodgings at Bristol. Coleridge endeavored ineffectually to raise his share of the proposed expenses by a series of public lectures. He was not even able to pay his lodging bill, and the friendly Cottle, printer, bookseller, and poetaster, came to the rescue with a welcome five-pound note. By this time Southey had abandoned pantisocracy, thus incurring the stern displeasure of Coleridge, who was still ostensibly faithful to the plan. However, when Cottle offered him a guinea and a half per hundred lines for his poetry, he seems to have found it unnecessary to retire to the backwoods for sustenance. In anticipation of marriage he had in August

**Marriage,**  
**Oct. 4, 1795.**

secured a cottage at Clevedon, in Somersetshire (it is still standing), and on October 4, 1795, Coleridge and Sarah Fricker were married at the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, in Bristol, famous even then for its association with Chatterton's career.

The honeymoon began auspiciously enough at Clevedon. He was certainly happy in his domestic life, if we accept the testimony of *The Æolian Harp*,

**Clevedon,**  
**October, 1795.**

a sincere and beautiful poem written in the Clevedon cottage.\* His literary prospects were exceptionally bright, and his ambition and intellectual powers alike seemed to point forward to a brilliant and unclouded career. With a laudable desire to increase his means, he determined to establish a weekly

**The Watchman,**  
**1796, March**  
**to May.**

journal to be called *The Watchman*. With the object of soliciting subscriptions, Coleridge set out upon a journey through the north country, "preaching by the way in most of the great towns as an hireless volunteer, in a blue coat and white waistcoat, that not a rag of the woman of Baby-

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\* Compare also *Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement*.

lon might be seen on me."\* The first number, announced for February 5, appeared on March 1. It was pronounced dull, and the succeeding numbers gave increasing offense to the subscribers. On May 13 publication was suspended, and but for a timely subscription, which the poet's friend Poole organized, he would have been in desperate straits.

Nothing seems to have prospered with him at this time. He was unsuccessful in a prospective editorship of the *Morning Chronicle*, and equally unfortunate, or so he thought, in failing to secure a lucrative tutorship of the sons of a wealthy Mrs. Evans.† However, a young man, Charles Lloyd, had come under the spell of Coleridge's conversation, and had gained the privilege for eighty pounds a year of living under the poet's roof on Redcliffe Hill, his new home near Bristol. With this sum and his meager literary earnings life was possible.

On the 19th of September, 1796, the first child was born, the brilliant David Hartley Coleridge. This

David Hartley Coleridge, born Sept. 19, 1796. seems to have brought a temporary return of happiness, but a morbid depression, evidently constitutional, soon settled again

upon the poet. He was eager to secure a house near his friend Poole, and the worry and anxiety consequent

upon his failure brought on a severe neuralgia. The neuralgia drove him to laudanum,

and from the clutches of this drug he never wholly shook himself free. "I took between sixty and seventy drops of laudanum," he wrote to Poole, "and *sopped* the Cerberus just as his mouth began to open. . . . I have a blister under my right ear, and I take twenty-five drops of laudanum every five hours, the ease and *spirits* gained by which have enabled me to write you this

\* For Coleridge's account of this tour see *Biographia Literaria*, chap. x.

† Unconnected with the before-mentioned Mary Evans.

flighty but not exaggerated account." A letter published in the *Academy* (February 24, 1894) shows that the vice had insinuated itself still earlier than this. It is dated 12 March, 1796: "Since I last wrote you I have been tottering on the verge of madness, my mind overbalanced on the *e contra* side of happiness, the blunders of my associate (in the *Watchman*), etc. . . . Such has been my situation for the last fortnight. *I have been obliged to take laudanum almost every night.*"

The consequences of this fatal habit upon his intellectual and moral welfare, and upon his personal happiness, can not be overestimated. At a later part of this short narrative it will be not inappropriate to insert his own description of himself when the vice had possessed him body and soul. Meanwhile, with brief and "blessed intervals," as Coleridge fondly called them, the word laudanum will be found writ large on every page and chapter of his life. For a few short years he was still to enjoy the almost unimpaired control of his faculties, and his period of ripest poetic activity follows close upon this first indulgence in the drug. But the downfall was swift to follow; and nothing in literary history is sadder than the sight of this noble nature struggling in the toils, and nothing more admirable than the moral recovery of his final years.

Coleridge's desire to be near his friend Poole was at length satisfied, and on the last day of the year the little family arrived at Nether Stowey in Somersetshire. The poet Wordsworth was their near neighbor,\* and here was formed that famous friendship, as significant in many ways for English literature as was for German literature the intercourse of Goethe and of Schiller.

Nether Stowey  
period, Dec. 31,  
1796, to Sep-  
tember, 1798.

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\* Alfoxden was only three miles distant.

Coleridge hoped to draw his chief sustenance from his vegetable garden, but literature flourished more vigorously than cabbages. The productiveness of both Coleridge and Wordsworth received a stimulus from their intercourse. In the intervals of Unitarian preaching Coleridge occupied himself until October with a tragedy, undertaken at the request of Sheridan. In its first form as *Osorio* this was rejected by the Drury Lane committee. Long afterward, in 1812, at the instance of Lord Byron, Coleridge recast the play, and under the altered title of *Remorse* it was produced at Drury Lane in 1813 with striking success. He received from that source £400, twice as much, he averred, as he had gained "by all his literary labors put together."

In June the second edition of his poems appeared, and in November of the same year occurred the memorable expedition with Wordsworth among the Quantock Hills. Here the scheme of the *Ancient Mariner* was discussed, with the original intention of making it a joint production. Wordsworth, however, found the subject too weird and supernatural, and abandoned it entirely to his friend. Coleridge worked eagerly upon the ballad until, on the 23d of March, 1798, it was completed. Meanwhile he had commenced the marvelous fragment *Christabel*, and many celebrated poems besides were written in that productive year between the summer of 1797 and the summer of 1798.\* This was the most happy of those "blessed intervals."

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\* To the Rev. George Coleridge, May 26, 1797; *This Lime-tree Bower my Prison*, June, 1797, to commemorate a visit of Charles Lamb; *Ode to France*, February, 1798, first published in the *Morning Post* as *The Recantation*, April, 1798; *Frost at Midnight*, February, 1798; *Fears in Soli-*

Throughout these months he was an occasional contributor to the *Morning Post*, and a frequent preacher in neighboring Unitarian chapels. In January, 1798, he was a candidate for the Unitarian pulpit in Shrewsbury. But now a most fortunate thing for Coleridge's material prospects occurred. Thomas and Josiah Wedg-

wood, sons of the famous potter, had been attracted by Coleridge's intellectual powers, and desiring to preserve them entirely for literature, they generously offered him an annuity of £150 for life. No conditions were attached to this save that he should abandon his intentions to preach, and devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy.\*

Possessed of this new source of income, a spirit of restlessness came over Coleridge. His friendship with Lloyd had come to an end, and with it the latter's residence beneath his roof. With his oldest friend, Lamb, he had also quarreled, and, most cogent reason of all, the Wordsworths had decided to abandon Stowey. These were some of the considerations that induced him to go abroad. His choice of Germany as a place of abode was doubtless determined by the desire to become familiar with German philosophy, then at its most brilliant epoch. His own mind was in a state of flux, and he desired a solidification of his ideas upon religious, political, and philosophical questions. Accordingly, in company with the Wordsworths, he set sail from Yarmouth on the 16th of September, 1798, the month in which the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared. He soon separated from his friends and pro-

The Wedgwood annuity.

The German visit, September, 1798, to June, 1799.

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*tude*, April, 1798; *Kubla Khan*, April (?), 1798 (composed in a narcotic sleep); *The Nightingale*, April, 1798.

\* For some reason, never satisfactorily explained, Josiah Wedgwood, in 1811, withdrew his half of the annuity. He was probably annoyed by Coleridge's degenerate habits.



ceeded alone to Ratzeburg. Thence he passed to Göttingen, where he matriculated in February, 1799. His life in Germany seems from his own account to have been full of work. But poetry held a small place in the midst of philosophical labors, and was destined from this time to sink into ever greater insignificance. After his return to England, in June, 1799, he had still enough of the "divine afflatus" to compose the second part of *Christabel*, and a few years later, in 1802, at a period of the deepest physical and mental distress, he roused himself sufficiently from his lethargy to write the poignant *Ode to Dejection*, the swan song of his buried hopes. With this poem his career as poet may be considered closed. Yet occasionally the weak flame revived, as in the self-chastising lines to Wordsworth (*To a Gentleman*), written after hearing the latter recite to him his great poem *The Prelude*.

"Ah! as I listened with a heart forlorn,  
 The pulses of my being beat anew:  
 And even as life returns upon the drowned,  
 Life's joys rekindling roused a throng of pains—  
 Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe  
 Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart;  
 And fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of hope;  
 And hope that scarce would know itself from fear;  
 Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,  
 And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;  
 And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,  
 And all which patient toil had reared, and all,  
 Commune with *thee* had opened out—but flowers  
 Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,  
 In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!"

This poem, written in 1807, reflects the somber and hopeless despair in which Coleridge was plunged. Opium and metaphysics had done their work.

The narrative of Coleridge's life after his return from

Germany may be somewhat briefly summarized. He returned for a short visit to Stowey, but his regular life there was never resumed. While making a tour of the lake country with Wordsworth he received a proposal from a journalist named Stuart to write political articles for the *Morning Post*. To this request Coleridge acceded, and on November 27th he arrived in London,

where he was presently joined by his wife and children. The late Mr. Traill, in his *Life of Coleridge*, considers the brief journalistic period which ensued to have been exceptionally brilliant. Coleridge, though erroneously asserting that he had "raised the sale of the *Morning Post* from an inconsiderable number to seven thousand a day in the course of one year," still felt that the task was unworthy of his powers. "On Stuart's papers I wasted the prime and manhood of my intellect—adding thereby nothing to my fortune or reputation." Suffice it to say, that the work was uncongenial and was soon abandoned.

It has always been said that Coleridge was incapable of performing a compulsory task, but the laborious translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, which falls within this period, is a brilliant exception to the rule. It was egregious hack work, and Coleridge never viewed it under any other light. In November, 1800, he writes to a friend excusing himself for not finishing *Christabel*, because of "the deep unutterable disgust which I have suffered in the translation of the accursed *Wallenstein*, which seemed to have struck me with barrenness." This "irksome, soul-wearying labor" is considered the finest poetical translation in the English language.

In June Coleridge and his family visited the Wordsworths at Dove Cottage, their new home in the north

Greta Hall.

of England, and in July of the same year (1800) he settled down in Greta Hall, Keswick.

Schemes innumerable haunted his brain, but he was powerless to execute them. In the autumn of 1800 falls the second part of *Christabel*, and then comes silence until the painful *Ode to Dejection* in April, 1802. The interval had been the blackest time of his life, the fatal turning point Mr. Dykes Campbell has rightly called it. He was broken in health, estranged from his wife and home, and hopelessly in the toils of laudanum. Until 1802 he lived almost constantly with the Wordsworths. Then he wandered helplessly about from place to place, hopeless, irresolute, and miserable. He tried to solve the problem by change of scene and climate. On the 9th of April, 1804, he set sail for Malta. He had received a loan of £100 from Wordsworth, and a gift of the same amount from Sir George Beaumont. His annuity he left behind for his wife. In July he became the guest and quasi-private secretary of the Governor of Malta, Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Ball. From August to November he spent in Sicily. In January, 1805, he was appointed acting public secretary at Malta. In September of the same year he sailed for Naples, leaving that place in January, 1806, for Rome. Beyond meeting a few famous men nothing of importance resulted from this visit. He left hastily on the intimation that Napoleon had ordered his arrest because of certain articles which had formerly appeared in the *Morning Post*.

In August he returned to England "ill, penniless, and worse than homeless." Alienation from his wife had become confirmed, but his friends still remained faithful, and new ones arose to give him a helping hand. In fact, he was now living almost entirely upon other people's charity. De Quincey,

a perfect stranger to the poet, came to the rescue with a generous gift of £300.

In 1808 Coleridge roused himself sufficiently to announce a course of lectures at the Royal Institution on the *Principles of Poetry*. He was generally late in putting in an appearance. Sometimes he never appeared at all. The lectures were certainly a painful disappointment to his friends, although De Quincey probably exaggerated the unhappy situation in describing his frequent ineffectual efforts to speak with his black and swollen tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth.

In September, 1808, we find Coleridge living with the Wordsworths at Grasmere. In December he wrote to Davy: "My health and spirits are improved beyond my boldest hopes. A very painful effort of moral courage has been remunerated by tranquillity—by ease from the sting of self-disapprobation. I have done more for the last ten weeks than I had done for three years before. . . . I would willingly inform you of my chance of success in obtaining a sufficient number of subscribers, so as to justify me prudentially in commencing the work, but I do not possess grounds even for a sane conjecture. It will depend in a great measure on the zeal of my friends."

The reference here is to a proposed literary periodical to be named *The Friend*. Coleridge was inordinately hopeful of success, but Wordsworth voiced the general opinion of his friends in a letter to Poole: "I give it to you as my deliberate opinion, founded upon proofs which have been strengthening for years, that he neither will nor can execute anything of important benefit to himself, his family, or mankind." Everything "is frustrated by a derangement in his intellectual and moral constitution. In fact, he has no voluntary power of mind

*The Friend*,  
June, 1809, to  
March, 1810.

whatever, nor is he capable of acting under any *constraint* of duty or moral obligation. . . . *The Friend* may appear . . . but it can not go on for any length of time. I am sure it can not."

Wordsworth was right. The arrangements for printing and distribution were eminently unpractical. Numbers were sometimes as much as seven weeks late, and when they appeared they were dull. The unhappy publication dragged itself on spasmodically until it ended with No. XXVII, on March 15, 1810. *The Friend*, as we now possess it, is rather a new work than a revision, and was composed at Highgate in 1818.

In October, 1810, after spending a few months at his own home, Greta Hall, Coleridge journeyed to London with Basil Montagu. He was to have been his guest for an indefinite period, but the visit was abruptly and painfully concluded.

Montagu was foolish enough to tell Coleridge that Wordsworth had requested him to say that certain of his habits had made him an intolerable guest at Allan Bank (Wordsworth's home), and that there seemed absolutely "no hope for him." The painful impression that these distorted remarks made upon Coleridge was never removed. In later years his intercourse with Wordsworth was resumed, but the old confiding relationship was never again established.\*

In November, 1810, Coleridge became the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan at Hammersmith, and with them in their various homes he remained with brief intermissions until 1816, when he took up his permanent abode with the Gillmans. The intervening years were uneventful

Breach between  
Coleridge and  
Wordsworth,  
1810.  
  
Lives with  
the Morgans,  
November,  
1810, to 1816.

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\* Compare the original form of the *Ode to Dejection* with its final altered form.

from a literary point of view. While staying with the Morgans he again assumed the rôle of journalist, in a very subordinate capacity as a subeditor of the *Courier*. His chief resource, however, was lecturing, and many courses were delivered by him with frequent success until his last appearance in this capacity in 1819.

His revised tragedy, *Remorse*, was produced in January, 1813, with distinguished success.\* Shortly afterward there is a new misunderstanding with Wordsworth. The result was disastrous for Coleridge's peace of mind, and the months between March and October are a blank in his life. His whereabouts even was a mystery to his friends.

The years between 1813 and 1816 were spent chiefly with the Morgans at Bristol and at Calne in the county of Wilts. He planned much but executed little. His opium disease had reached a most critical stage, to judge by the tone of his letters at this period. He had formerly tried to conceal his vice. Now this was no longer possible. To Cottle he wrote in April, 1814: "For ten years the anguish of my spirit has been indescribable, the sense of my danger staring, but the consciousness of my GUILT worse, far worse, than all. I have prayed with drops of agony on my brow, trembling not only before the justice of my Maker, but even before the mercy of my Redeemer. 'I gave thee so many talents, what hast thou done with them?' Secondly, overwhelmed as I am with a sense of my direful infirmity, I have never attempted to disguise or conceal the cause.† On the contrary, not only to friends have I stated the whole case with tears and the very bitterness of shame, but in two instances I have warned young men, mere acquaintances,

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\* See page 14.

† Biographers doubt the truth of this.

who had spoken of having taken laudanum, of the direful consequences, by an awful exposition of the tremendous effects upon myself.

"Thirdly, though before God I can not lift up my eyelids, and only do not despair of His mercy because to despair would be adding crime to crime, yet to my fellow-men I may say that I was seduced into the ACCURSED habit ignorantly. I had been almost bedridden for many months with swellings in my knees. In a medical journal, I unhappily met with an account of a cure performed in a similar case—by rubbing in of laudanum, at the same time taking a given dose internally. It acted like a charm, like a miracle! I recovered the use of my limbs, of my appetite, of my spirits, and this continued for near a fortnight. At length the unusual stimulus subsided, the complaint returned, the supposed remedy was recurred to—but I can not go through the dreary history.

"... Had I but a few hundred pounds, but £200, half to send to Mrs. Coleridge, and half to place myself in a private madhouse, where I could procure nothing but what a physician thought proper, and where a medical attendant might be constantly with me for two or three months (in less than that time life or death would be determined), then there might be hope. Now there is none! O God! how willingly would I place myself under Dr. Fox, in his establishment; for my case is a species of madness, only that it is a derangement, an utter impotence of the volition, and not of the intellectual faculties!"

So his life dragged on. In 1815 he put together the *Biographia Literaria*, with its famous criticism of Wordsworth. In 1816 the *Christabel* volume appeared (the poem had been known and admired for many years in MS.); and in the same year Coleridge placed himself un-

der the medical care of Mr. Gillman, a surgeon residing at Highgate.

Here the long twilight of his life was passed. He is no longer a poet save on rare occasions. Metaphysical speculation had won the day, and henceforth

Highgate,  
1816-1834. his influence was to be in a philosophical direction. More than any other man of his

time he affected the course of religious opinion in England, and from him as an ultimate source emanate alike the Broad Church and the Tractarian movements. His most important contributions to the literature of theology are: *Second Lay Sermon* (1817); *Aids to Reflection* (1825); *On the Constitution of Church and State* (1830).

Almost more important than his written work was the influence of his conversation, more especially upon the group of young men who gathered around him in his Highgate garret from about 1825 onward to the close. Carlyle was a transient visitor only, and though his recorded impressions savor of irreverence, for graphic expressiveness they are unrivaled. The word-portrait they give us, too, of Coleridge as he appeared in his declining years is exceedingly vivid, as we should expect. "The good man, he was now getting old, toward sixty perhaps, and gave you the idea of a life that had been full of sufferings; a life heavy-laden, half-vanquished, still swimming painfully in seas of manifold physical and other bewilderment. Brow and head were round and of massive weight, but the face was flabby and irresolute. The deep eyes, of a light hazel, were as full of sorrow as of inspiration; confused pain looked mildly from them, as in a kind of mild astonishment. The whole figure and air, good and amiable otherwise, might be called flabby and irresolute, expressive of weakness under possibility of strength. He hung loosely on his limbs, with knees bent, and stooping attitude; in walk-



ing, he rather shuffled than decisively stepped; and a lady once remarked he never could fix which side of the garden walk would suit him best, but continually shifted in corkscrew fashion, and kept trying both. A heavy-laden, high-aspiring, and surely much-suffering man. His voice, naturally soft and good, had contracted itself into a painful snuffle and singsong; he spoke as if preaching—you might have said preaching earnestly and also hopelessly the weightiest things.\* . . . Nothing could

His conversation.

be more copious than his talk; and furthermore it was always, virtually or literally, of the nature of a monologue, suffering no interruption, however reverent; hastily putting aside all foreign additions, annotations, or most ingenuous desires for elucidation, as well-meant superfluities which would never do. Besides, it was talk not flowing anywhere like a river, but spreading everywhere in inextricable currents and regurgitations, like a lake or sea, terribly deficient in definite goal or aim, nay, often in logical intelligibility; *what* you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it. So that, most times, you felt logically lost, swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world."—*Life of John Sterling*, Part I, chap. viii.

In this strain, or more uncharitably, the description continues at great length. Carlyle was never a sympathetic listener, "a passive bucket to be pumped into," as he phrased it. But more docile and admiring disciples were willing to testify to Coleridge's amazing powers of conversation.† Already in his younger years

\* For further descriptions of Coleridge's appearance, see page 26 (his own description), and also Dykes Campbell's Introduction to the poems, page xxxiv (Miss Wordsworth's description).

† See H. N. Coleridge. *Fraser's Magazine*, 1835, and Preface to *Table Talk*, Lockhart, *Quarterly Review*, lii. Keats's *Letters*, No. XCII (Colvin).

this power had made him famous. De Quincey's record of his first impressions is not alone picturesque, but emphasizes also the fact that Coleridge's discursiveness, which had wearied and perplexed Carlyle, was in truth subjected to the severest logical sequence. "I was too anxious to see him under all aspects to think of declining this invitation. That point being settled, Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana or the St. Lawrence, that, having been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical that it was possible to conceive. . . . Coleridge, to many people, and often I have heard the complaint, seemed to wander; and he seemed then to wander the most when, in fact, his resistance to the wandering instinct was greatest—viz., when the compass and huge circuit, by which his illustrations moved, traveled farthest into remote regions before they began to revolve. Long before this coming round commenced most people had lost him, and naturally enough supposed that he had lost himself. They continued to admire the separate beauty of the thoughts, but did not see their relation to the dominant theme. . . . However, I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic the most severe was as inalienable from his modes of thinking as grammar from his language."—De Quincey, *Recollections of the Lake Poets*.

There is nothing further of importance to record of Coleridge's declining years. In 1824 he was elected an associate of the new Royal Society of Literature with an annuity of one hundred guineas. This lapsing with

the death of George IV in 1830, it was made up for him by his friends. In 1828 he passed several weeks on the Rhine with Wordsworth and his daughter. He revised in 1829 the final edition of his poems issued during his lifetime. In 1833, in anticipation of the end, he appointed a young friend and disciple, J. H. Green, as his literary executor, committing to his charge his philosophical fragments. Some years later Green embodied his master's teachings in a now forgotten *Spiritual Philosophy*. On July 25, 1834, Coleridge died.

#### PERSONAL APPEARANCE, TEMPERAMENT, ETC.

Coleridge thus describes himself in a letter to John Thelwall:

"As to me, my face, unless when animated by immediate eloquence, expresses great sloth and great, indeed almost idiotic, good nature. 'Tis a mere carcass of a face—fat, flabby, and expressive chiefly of inexpression. Yet I am told that my eyes, eyebrows, and forehead are physiognomically good; but of this the deponent knoweth not. As to my shape, 'tis a good shape enough if measured, but my gait is awkward, and the walk of the whole man indicates *indolence capable of energies*.\* I am, and ever have been, a great reader, and have read almost everything—a library cormorant. I am *deep* in all out of the way books, whether of the monkish times or of the puritanical era. I have read and digested most of the historical writers, but I do not *like* history. Metaphysics and poetry and 'facts of mind'—that is, accounts of all the strange phantasms that ever possessed 'your philosophy'; dreamers, from Thoth the Egyptian to Taylor the English pagan, are my darling studies.†

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\* The italics are Coleridge's.

† A fantastic theme like the *Ancient Mariner* would therefore have a strong natural appeal for Coleridge.

In short, I seldom read except to amuse myself, and I am almost always reading. Of useful knowledge, I am a so-so chemist, and I love chemistry.\* All else is *blank*, but I *will* be (please God) an horticulturist and a farmer. I compose very little, and I absolutely hate composition, and such is my dislike that even a sense of duty is sometimes too weak to overpower it. I can not breathe through my nose, so my mouth, with sensual thick lips, is almost always open. In conversation I am impassioned."—*Letter to John Thelwall*, November, 1796.

Miss Wordsworth's contemporary description tallies very well with the above: "He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every trifle. At first I thought him very plain—that is, for about three minutes. He is pale, thin,† has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but gray, such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dull-est expression; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind; it has more of 'the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine, dark eyebrows and an overhanging forehead."—*Memoirs of Wordsworth*, I. 99.

Add to these descriptions of Coleridge's personal appearance that given by Carlyle of the poet as he appeared in old age (see page 23), and you will have a sufficiently vivid mental image of the man.

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\* He was a great friend of Sir Humphry Davy.

† Stout in later years.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- Born, October 21, 1772.  
 Enters at Christ's Hospital, July 18, 1782.  
 Residence at Jesus College, Cambridge, October, 1791.  
 Enlists in King's Regiment of Light Dragoons, December 2, 1798.  
 Discharged from the army, April 10, 1794.  
 Visits Oxford and meets Southey, June, 1794.  
 Pantisocracy scheme, autumn, 1794.  
 Leaves Cambridge without degree, December, 1794.  
 Settles at Bristol. Public lectures, January, 1795.  
 Marries Sarah Fricker, October 4, 1795.  
 Publishes first edition of poems, April, 1796.  
 Issues *The Watchman*, March 1 to May 13, 1796.  
 Hartley Coleridge born, September 19, 1796.  
 Settles at Nether Stowey, December 31, 1796.  
 Second edition of poems, June, 1797.  
 The *Ancient Mariner* begun, November 13, 1797; finished, March 23, 1798.  
 First part of *Christabel* begun, 1797.  
 Receives £150 annuity from the Wedgwoods, January, 1798.  
 Goes to Germany, September 16, 1798.  
 Returns from Germany, July, 1799.  
 Journalism with *Morning Post*, December, 1799.  
 Translates Schiller's *Wallenstein*, spring, 1800.  
 Settles at Greta Hall, Keswick, July 24, 1800.  
 Second part of *Christabel*, autumn, 1800.  
 Studies German metaphysics, 1801.  
 Third edition of poems, 1803.  
 Sails for Malta, April 9, 1804.  
 Travels in Sicily, August to November, 1804.  
 Resides in Rome, January to May, 1806.  
 Returns to England, August, 1806.  
 Begins to appear again as lecturer, 1808 and following years.  
 Settles at Allan Bank, Grasmere (with Wordsworth), September, 1808.  
 Issues *The Friend*. June 1, 1809, to March 15, 1810.  
 Settles at Hammersmith with the Morgans, November 3, 1810.

His tragedy *Remorse* at Drury Lane, January 23, 1813.

Settles with Mr. Gilman at Highgate, April 16, 1816.

Publication of *Christabel*, June, 1816.

Publication of *Biographia Literaria* and *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817.

*The Friend* revised and published, 1818.

Becomes "Royal Associate" of Royal Society of Literature, May, 1824.

Publication of *Aids to Reflection*, May to June, 1825.

Tour on the Rhine with Wordsworth, June to July, 1828.

Revised edition of poetical works, 1829.

Publication of *Church and State*, 1830.

Death, July 25, 1834.

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## BRIEF SURVEY OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POETRY

However unique its inspiration, *The Ancient Mariner* is not an isolated or abnormal growth. By abstracting it entirely from the circumstances of its production, we can doubtless appreciate, in some measure at least, the individual and united beauties of the poem. But a completer realization of its power and charm should be sought and attained by a consideration of the poet's life in relation to his work, and by an effort to understand the poetical conditions from which that work arose. The necessarily meager biographic detail has been presented, and it now remains briefly to indicate the main currents of English poetic literature in the century of Coleridge's birth.

The commanding figure of Dryden (1631-1700) dominates the opening years of that century. His influence soon merges itself in the more powerful influence of Pope, and our classical Augustan epoch is born. It would carry us too far afield to assign the causes for this form of literature. In brief, we may say that people had tired of the extravagant excesses of the post-Elizabethan or metaphysical school, and desired above all things correctness of form and moderateness in the sphere of the emotions. The classical movement upon its intellectual side, dramatic writing apart, is curiously akin to the earlier and contemporary school of literature in France; and international influences doubtless played an important part in maintaining the vogue of classicism in England. But the most interesting thing for us to observe is that even in the midreign of classicism evidences are not wanting of a spirit of unrest and mild revolt against the established rule. The following diagram essays to present in clear outline the characteristics of (1) the classical period, (2) the transitional period, (3) the modern romantic school.

CLASSICAL.	TRANSITIONAL.	MODERN.
<p>1. Restriction of views on religion and philosophy. Literature is inspired by a mechanical deism.</p> <p>2. Restriction as to metrical form. The heroic couplet is <i>par excellence</i> the classical form of verse.</p> <p>3. Restriction as to the language. Poetical diction abstract, colorless, and conventional.</p>	<p>1. Religious revival. Wesley, etc.</p> <p>2. (a) Revival of blank verse—e. g., Thomson's <i>Seasons</i>, 1730; Young's <i>Night Thoughts</i>, 1745; Cowper's <i>Task</i>, 1785. (b) Imitations of Spenser—e. g., Thomson's <i>Castle of Indolence</i>, 1748; Shenstone's <i>Schoolmistress</i>, 1742; Thomas Warton's <i>Poems</i> and his <i>Observations on the Faerie Queene</i>, 1754. (c) Imitations of Milton—e. g., blank verse (see a). Influence of <i>Il Penseroso</i> on Blair, Young, Gray, etc. The sonnet form revived by Gray. (d) Odes. (Classicism had not discounted this form.)</p> <p>3. Not much advance upon the classical period.</p>	<p>1. Extension of religious and philosophic thought through the influence of German transcendentalism. Poetry deals with deeper problems. Element of mystery.</p> <p>2. Extreme variety of metrical forms. Blank verse, sonnets, etc. Contrast Keats's or Swinburne's couplets with the couplets of Pope.</p> <p>3. It was with regard to conventionalities of poetic diction, especially in the province of descriptive poetry, that Coleridge and Wordsworth made their severest attack upon the classical school. See Wordsworth's over-harsh analysis of Gray's sonnet <i>On the Death of Mr. West</i>.</p>



CLASSICAL.	TRANSITIONAL.	MODERN.
<p>4. The motto "Follow Nature" implied the study of the morals and manners of polite society. Nature poetry, as we understand the term, was unknown. Observe the conventional pastorals which represent the only effort to escape town life. Restricted theories of beauty, into which the outward world of the beautiful or the sublime does not enter.</p>	<p>4. Return to Nature in a truer sense. Thomson's <i>Seasons</i>, Macpherson's <i>Ossian</i>, 1762, Cowper, Burns, and influence of Rousseau. Crabbe, <i>The Village</i>, 1783.</p>	<p>4. This is where the modern school has gained its greatest triumphs. A spiritual penetration into the world of Nature—a poetical effort to realize Nature as an influence toward beauty and morality.</p>
<p>5. Pseudo-classicism. Scanty knowledge of Greek literature. Adoption of imitative Latin models. Artificial reproduction of classical mythology.</p>	<p>5. Appearance of the gods and heroes of the old Teutonic mythology—e. g., Gray's <i>Odes</i>.</p>	<p>5. A true appreciation of the beauties of Greek literature—e. g., Keats's <i>Hyperion</i>, Shelley's <i>Hymns to Apollo and Pan</i>, Tennyson's <i>Ulysses</i>, etc.</p>
<p>6. Exclusively modern—i. e., eighteenth century, where not imitatively Latin. English literature for the classicists began with Waller and Dryden.</p>	<p>6. Revival of interest in Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton. Extraordinary revival of mediævalism. The Gothic taste—e. g., Thomas Warton's <i>History of English Poetry</i>, 1774, and <i>Observations on the Faerie Queene</i>, 1754; J. Warton's <i>Essay on Pope</i>, 1756; Percy's <i>Reliques</i>, 1765; and the renewed interest in our old national and popular poetry. <i>Ossian</i> (again), 1762; Chatterton's <i>Rowley Poems</i>, 1777; Gray's <i>Progress of Poesy</i>, 1754; Gray's <i>Bard</i>, 1757, etc.; Collins's <i>Ode on Popular Superstitions</i>; Horace Walpole's <i>Castle of Otranto</i>. Similar movement in Germany.</p>	<p>6. Romantic mediævalism in its culmination—e. g., Scott, Keats, Coleridge, and, in our own time, Rossetti, Tennyson, Swinburne, Shelley, Byron, and Wordsworth were not affected by this, though Wordsworth aimed at the simplicity of the old ballads.</p>

CLASSICAL.	TRANSITIONAL.	MODERN.
<p>7. Repression of individualism. (Cf. the self-restraint of the French classical school.) Literature has a social basis. Achieves intellectual brilliancy, but at the cost of emotional coldness. Therefore, the forms most cultivated are satiric, didactic, and mock-heroic poetry. Strange dearth of classical drama, for Dryden here is the reverse of classical, and the period of Pope can only point to Addison's <i>Cato</i>.</p> <p>8. Respect of constituted authority. Aristocratic tendency.</p>	<p>7. Timidly lyrical forms of Gray and Collins, but individual emotion still held in check. Then follows the influence of Rousseau and the outbreak of the French Revolution.</p> <p>8. Timid beginnings of the democratic spirit—e. g., Goldsmith. Bold expression in Cowper, and especially Burns.</p>	<p>7. Outburst of lyrical poetry, especially Shelley, Coleridge, Keats. Emotional qualities obtain full sway. Elizabethan exuberance</p> <p>with</p> <p>(8) an assertion of individualism. A determination of poets to follow the bent of their own individual genius, and a realization of the force of the democratic spirit. Shelley and Byron are revolutionary poets.</p>

It is not within the province of this book to expand the above material. Some comprehension of it is, however, necessary before attaining a just appreciation of the work performed by Coleridge and Wordsworth for English literature. What is especially important to observe is that the path had been broken for them by their predecessors, and that they were not absolutely pioneers of progress in the poetic wilderness. Indeed, Wordsworth is careful to acknowledge that Thomson's *Seasons* had given English poetry its true direction in diverting men's attention from the artificial rhetoric of society to

the invigorating world of nature. The other transitional processes indicated in the tabular summary will be developed by the instructor in more or less detail in proportion to the requirements of the class. The relation of these tendencies to Coleridge's poetical theories may easily be determined. English ballad literature, owing to its peculiar significance with reference to *The Ancient Mariner*, demands a special treatment, and an account of its characteristics will not be inappropriate here.

### BALLAD POETRY

The revived interest in our old national poetry, which dates from the publication of Percy's *Reliques* in 1765, led to some of the most important developments in Continental literature. In England, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, and Keats were strongly influenced by the ballad movement, and were not slow to acknowledge their debt to Bishop Percy's publication. Wordsworth confessed that English poetry had been absolutely redeemed by them. "I do not think that there is a writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the *Reliques*. I know that it is so with my friends, and, for myself, I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own." \*

The influence of these old national ballads of England upon *The Ancient Mariner* is so obvious that a description of the characteristics of the genuine ballad must precede any adequate investigation of the modern poem. How much Coleridge owed to the traditional form is a question which the student is recommended to examine on the basis of the information which follows.

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\* Appendix to the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

*The Ballad, its Nature and its Origin*

With regard to the definition of the term "ballad" there has been much needless confusion, at least in the popular mind. The question of the ultimate origin of the ballad is likewise fraught with confusion; but this arises from the necessary mystery which surrounds a creative process, and constitutes in itself one of the most difficult of literary problems.

*Confusion as to the Name*

The confusion with regard to the name makes it almost necessary to define what the ballad is not before determining what it is. No one probably would confound the artificial ballade of the schools (the product of French imitation) with the native ballad of popular growth. But a great many people do persist in applying the term to modern poems of the type of *Barbara Frietchie*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, or the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

These narrative poems have all borrowed certain surface characteristics from the genuine ballad, something of its simplicity and quaintness, perhaps, but with a distant suggestion at the best of the unaffected *naïveté* and artless manner of the original type. This primitive form, as we must imagine it once to have existed, was essentially a narrative poem in lyrical stanzaic form, designed, in its earliest stages at least, to serve as an accompaniment for the dance, bearing no traces of individual authorship, and preserved mainly by oral tradition. It is therefore imperative, for the sake of precision, to discriminate absolutely between the artistic imitation of popular ballads and the genuine ballad of the people. To make this distinction clearer, a short

account must be given of the more important theories connected with the origin of the ballad properly so called.

*Origin of the Ballad*

We are here confronted with two rival theories. The question roughly divides itself as follows: Did the ballad make itself? or was it produced like any poem in modern times by some individual whose talents singled him out as the versifier or bard of his rough community? The first theory, it will be observed, almost eliminates the individual in favor of the primitive community. The second theory insists upon the positive intervention of the individual in the shaping of the ballad, and holds that the circumstances of oral transmission, by which all the ancient ballads were preserved, are sufficient to account for their popular characteristics. They were thus subjected to constant variation, and all traces of individual authorship were swiftly obliterated. On the other hand, supporters of the communal theory insisted "that the ballad must be the outcome and the expression of the whole community, and that this community must be homogeneous—must belong to a time when, in the common atmosphere of ignorance, so far as book-lore is concerned, one habit of thought and one standard of action animate every member from prince to plowboy. Ballads of the primitive type—of course we do not know them in their original form—were the product of a people as yet undivided into a lettered and an unlettered class. When learning came among the folk it drove the ballad first into byways, and then altogether out of living literature."\*

It will be readily seen that, even if we grant the assumption of race authorship, it would be impossible to

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\* Gummere. Introduction to *Old English Ballads*, xxvii.

account for the words and melody of the ballads without presupposing that some one first said or sang them. We therefore find that the modern authorities on ballad literature abandon both of the above theories on their extreme side, and chiefly concern themselves with adjusting the respective shares of poet and people in the making of the primitive ballad. Thus the late Professor Child, the supreme authority on this question, writes on the subject of ballad poetry as follows: "Though they do not write themselves, as William Grimm has said, still the author counts for nothing, and it is not by mere accident, but with the best reason, that they have come down to us anonymous."

We must imagine that some minstrel, skilled in music and song, has gathered the people together on an occasion of great significance. All his audience are thrilling with the excitement of some recent martial event, or stirred by the memory of some feat of warlike prowess. The deeds of the hero are familiar to all. His history, whether recent or legendary, is common property; and they are now gathered together to celebrate him in dance and song. Some one suggests a well-known episode in his career, and forthwith the minstrel strikes a martial strain, and chants the exploits of the hero in rude and broken verse, improvised for the occasion. He gives out the refrain, and the people repeat it in chorus while he meditates the verse which follows. Any one who thinks of a suitable verse may contribute it. The respective parts of poet and populace are here discernible. The actual words and melody must emanate from the individual, but the sentiments are of the people.

The minstrel is keenly alive to the effect of his stanzas upon his hearers, and when he carries his ballad wares to the neighboring castle he is careful to omit what has not given pleasure.

Meanwhile this same rude ballad which we have seen in the making has also been carried hither and thither by all who had sung its easy melodies, and they too refashion it to their liking, forgetting and changing, adding and striking out. Finally, if the ballad has stood the wear and tear of time, it is at last in one or many of its forms committed to manuscript, and perpetuated, perhaps, after many centuries, in printer's ink.

### *General Characteristics of the Ballad*

Being thus the product of an unsophisticated and unreflecting age, the genuine ballad is necessarily *naïve*, and marked by an utter absence of subjectivity and self-consciousness. Coming from the people as a whole, "from the compact body as yet undivided by lettered or unlettered taste, it represents the sentiment neither of individuals nor of a class. It inclines to the narrative, the concrete, and the exterior, and it has no mark of the artist and his sentiment."\* In view also of its spontaneous character, and because the episodes it presents are intimately known to the audience, its narrative is extremely broken by frequent omissions and abrupt transitions, while repetitions and stock descriptive phrases are constantly resorted to in order to facilitate memory.

As remarkable as the absence of reflection and sentimentality in the substance is the lack of poetic adornment in the style. Metaphors and similes are rare, and when found are usually exceedingly simple—"red as a rose," "as green as grass"—conventional phrases that all ballads share in common. There is never any intention to produce a fine poetic effect by their means. Iteration is the leading characteristic of ballad style, and the story

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\* Gummere. Introduction, p. xvi.

is frequently told by "incremental repetition," which Professor Gummere describes as the repetition of a question with its answer. This may go on from stanza to stanza until the poem is completed.

It is impossible to quote any short ballad which should exemplify all these qualities. The ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens* is given here because of its undoubted excellence, and partly also because it was an acknowledged favorite with Coleridge. It lacks refrain, and its extreme brevity did not render repetition or reiteration essential (but notice lines 8 and 20). In other respects it adequately enough represents the general ballad characteristics.

First, as to poetic treatment. It deals with a pathetic theme in a manly and straightforward way. There is a total absence of sentimentality and moralizing. The theme is entered upon at once with no labored preparatory description. The events of the narrative were familiar, and superfluity of detail is therefore shunned. The sudden transition from description to dialogue is especially characteristic.

Secondly, as to form. It is written in the usual ballad measure, like *The Ancient Mariner*, having four verses in each stanza, riming a, b, c, b, with four accents in the first and third verses and three each in the second and fourth.

The general movement is iambic, but, as in *The Ancient Mariner*, there are not infrequent variations from this type, e. g. :

1. Omission of unstressed syllables, especially in the initial foot, e. g., stanza 2, line 1.
2. Anapæstic movement, e. g., stanza 6, line 4.

There are frequent substitutions in ballad poetry of trochees for iambs. The essential thing seems to be to preserve merely the proper number of accents.



**RIME.**—Initial rime or alliteration was the system of Anglo-Saxon verse. In ballad poetry alliteration may serve as an adornment, but never takes the place of rime.

The riming system of this typical ballad does not therefore materially differ from our poem, except that assonance is occasionally substituted for ordinary rime; e. g., stanzas 6 and 11. Internal rime, so frequently employed by Coleridge, will be noticed in stanza 11, line 1.

#### SIR PATRICK SPENS

1. The king sits in Dumferling toune,  
Drinking the blude-reid wine :  
“ O whar will I get good sailor,  
To sail this schip of mine ? ”
2. Up and spak an eldern knight,  
Sat at the king's richt kne :  
“ Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor,  
That sails upon the se.”
3. The king has written a braid \* letter,  
And signed it wi his hand,  
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,  
Was walking on the sand.
4. The first line that Sir Patrick red,  
A loud lauch † lauched he ;  
The next line that Sir Patrick red,  
The teir blinded his ee.
5. “ O wha is this has don this deid,  
This ill deid don to me,  
To send me out this time o' the yeir,  
To sail upon the se ? ”
6. “ Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,  
Our guid schip sails the morne : ”  
“ O say na sae, my master deir,  
For I feir a deadlie storme.

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\* Open.

† Laugh.

7. " Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone,  
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,  
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,  
That we will cum to harme."
8. O our Scots nobles wer richt laith  
To weet their cork-heild schoone:  
Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,  
Thair hats they swam aboone.\*
9. O lang, lang may their ladies sit,  
Wi thair fans into their hand,  
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence  
Cum sailing to the land.
10. O lang, lang may the ladies stand,  
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,  
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,  
For they'll se thame na mair.
11. Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour,  
It's fiftie fadom deip,  
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,  
Wi the Scots lords at his feit.

### *Application to the Ancient Mariner*

The student should examine the text of Coleridge's poem, and note his adherence to or divergence from the true ballad characteristics: 1. As to the method of composition. 2. As to the general effect of the poem. 3. As to form, with reference alike to prosody and language.

### THE LYRICAL BALLADS

(Containing *The Ancient Mariner* and other poems of Coleridge and Wordsworth)

It may be taken for granted that the student has gained a general idea of the poetic conditions in the

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\* They were drowned.

eighteenth century. It remains now to fix our attention upon two tendencies which were striving for the ascendancy in the last years of the century, when classicism had quite spent its force. A quotation from Professor Dowden will adequately describe these tendencies, and aid us the better to appreciate the importance of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

"In the literature of the time there were two powerful tendencies, each of which was liable to excess when it operated alone, each of which needed to work in harmony with the other, and to take something into itself from the other. A little before the death of Johnson, English poetry had almost reached the lowest ebb. It has often been said that its revival was due to the excitement and enthusiasm caused by the Revolution in France; but this is certainly untrue. In 1785 appeared Cowper's poem, *The Task*. Two years previously the most remarkable of Crabbe's earlier group of poems, *The Village*, had been published. In 1786 the Kilmarnock edition of the poems of Burns was issued. Thus our poetry had sprung into sudden and splendid life before that memorable year, the centenary of which has recently been celebrated in Paris. And by what means did English poetry renew its life and regain its vigor? By a return to Nature. Burns sang direct out of his own warm heart and out of the joys and sorrows of his fellows. The daisy in the furrow, the mouse in the stubble field, the dying ewe in the ditch, the rustic patriarch among his children and servants, the humors of Scotch drink, the humors of Scotch ecclesiastical parties, and the passions of his own wayward heart supplied him with the themes of his song. Cowper turned from the wire-drawn abstractions in verse which had done duty as poetry and looked around him in his walks about Olney, or filled his senses and spirit with the domestic pleasures of Mary

Unwin's home, and uttered in verse the feelings aroused in him by his garden, his walk in the crisp December morning, his evening fireside, his newspaper and easy-chair. And Crabbe resolved to set down for once the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth about the life of the peasant, or the rough fisher on our eastern coasts. He was sick of the ideality of sweet Auburns, and of Corydons complaining of their amorous pains, 'the only pains, alas, they never feel.' He aimed at being what in our present critical phraseology we term a realist or naturalist.

"... But with this tendency there coexisted another which was also strong. It was the tendency toward romance which gave their popularity to the *Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*, which appears in the modern-antiques of Chatterton, and in connection with a sentiment supposed to be that of primitive poetry in Macpherson's *Ossian*. The Gothic revival which in our century became learned and antiquarian was then sentimental and imaginative. As Crabbe may serve to represent the extreme of naturalism in art, so 'Monk' Lewis may serve to represent the other extreme, the extravagance of the romantic tendency. His *Castle Spectre*, a play brimful of supernatural horrors, was produced in the year in which Coleridge and Wordsworth met at Nether Stowey, and it had a run of sixty nights. . . . The gross marvel and mystery amassed in 'The Monk' would suffice for a library of our modern tales of horror.

"Here, then, were two movements in our literature, each operating apart from the other, and each prone to excess—naturalism, tending to a hard, dry, literal manner, unilluminated by the light of imagination; romance, tending to become a coarse revel in material horrors. English poetry needed first that romance should be saved

and ennobled by the presence and the power of truth, and, secondly, that naturalism, without losing any of its fidelity to fact, should be saved and ennobled by the presence and the power of imagination. And this was precisely what Coleridge and Wordsworth contributed to English poetry in their joint volume of *Lyrical Ballads*, which in consequence may justly be described as marking if not making an epoch in the history of our literature."\*

Or, as Professor Herford very tersely puts it, with an important reference to the mystical poetry of another predecessor, Blake: "Here the two lines of advance along which poetry had been slowly borne by 'realists' like Cowper and Crabbe, and visionaries like Blake, at length met. Here, too, the crude marvel-mongering of the Radcliffian school was supplemented by the psychological veracity, without which the marvelous can not be the basis of great poetry. Horace Walpole contrived 'marvels' by violently distorting Nature; Mrs. Radcliffe, with more illusive skill in devising them, was careful to explain them away. To Wordsworth and Coleridge the world of familiar undoubted things was itself full of expressive affinities and inexplicable suggestion."†

#### COLERIDGE THE POET

"No man has all the resources of poetry in such profusion. His fancy and diction would long ago have placed him above all his contemporaries had they been under the direction of a sound judgment and a steady will."—*Sir Walter Scott*.

"Of Coleridge's best verses I venture to affirm that the world has nothing like them, and can never have; that they are of the highest kind and their own. An age

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\* Professor Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, pp. 336-338.

† C. H. Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, pp. 152-153.

that should neglect or forget Coleridge might neglect or forget any poet that ever lived. That may be said of him which can hardly be said of any but the greatest among men, that come what may to the world in course of time, it will never see his place filled.”—*Algernon Charles Swinburne*.

“Yet Coleridge is, or may be reckoned a great poet, because every now and again he captures in verse that indefinable emotion which is less articulately expressed in music, and in some unutterable way he transports us into the world of dream and desire. This is a very vague fashion of saying what hardly permits itself to be said. We might put it that Coleridge has, on occasion, the power to move us, as we are moved by the most rarely beautiful cosmic effects of magic lights and shadows; by the silver on lakes for a chosen moment in the dawn of twilight; by the fragrant deeps of dewy forests; by sudden, infrequent passions of heart and memory; and by unexpected potencies of imagination. What those things, and such things as these, can do in life, Coleridge can do in verse. His world becomes ‘an unsubstantial fairy place,’ and yet more real than the world of experience; it is a place which we may have remembered out of a previous life, or may have foreseen, in a glance of the not-ourselves in which we mysteriously move and have our being. Coleridge has, in brief, ‘the key of the happy golden land,’ but he seldom opens the portals that unfold themselves at the sound of his music.

‘He on honey dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of paradise,’

and therefore with music ‘he builds that dome in air’ of his pleasure-house.

“It is his possession of this gift, the rarest gift, that makes Coleridge great; his own consciousness could not

tell whence the gift came, nor why it came so seldom."—  
*Andrew Lang.*

"His spiritualized nature teems with color and melody and perfume; and his early poetry contains several pieces from which all direct political and metaphysical content falls away. The *Songs of the Pixies* (1793), the *Lines on an Autumnal Evening*, and *Lewti* (1794) are pervaded by this fine sensuousness in which no other English poet quite resembles Coleridge. His touch has at once the voluptuous quality of Keats, and the mystic quality of Shelley. He paints the russet-suited landscape of eighteenth century idyllists from the rich and varied palette which we are accustomed to call Celtic. The clouds are of amber and purple. The fragrance of furze and of bean-flower haunts the page. Yet while all things retain their full value as sensation, they are invested with dreamy semblances of things beyond sensation; they are not solid and opaque, but full of half lights and elusive suggestions. . . ."

Both Coleridge and Wordsworth were, "as Wordsworth said, 'prophets of Nature,' though Coleridge's prophecy was far less continuous, many-sided, and serene, and both were romantic poets. . . . Both are the great English masters, as Goethe, who unites and transcends their spheres, is the great European master of poetic realism; both possess, though not with equal security, the region in which Romance and Nature meet, though Coleridge reaches it by 'the ladder of the impossible,' Wordsworth by the steeper and more treacherous ladder of the commonplace."—*C. H. Herford.*

"No doubt we have in Coleridge the most striking example in literature of a great genius given in trust to a nerveless will and a fitful purpose. But I think the

secret of his doing no more in poetry is to be found in the fact that the judgment, so far from being absent, grew to be there in excess. His critical sense rose like a forbidding apparition in the path of his poetic production. . . . It is enough for us here that he has written some of the most poetical poetry in the language, and one poem, *The Ancient Mariner*, not only unparalleled, but unapproached in its kind, and that kind of the rarest. It is marvelous in its mastery over that delightfully fortuitous inconsequence that is the adamantine logic of dreamland.”—*James Russell Lowell*.

“Coleridge’s poetical performance is like some exotic plant, just managing to blossom a little in the somewhat un-English air of his southwestern birthplace, but never quite well there. What shapes itself for criticism as the main phenomenon of Coleridge’s poetic life is not, as with most true poets, the gradual development of a poetic gift, determined, enriched, retarded by the actual circumstances of the poet’s life, but the sudden blossoming, through one short season, of such a gift already perfect in its kind, which thereafter deteriorates as suddenly, with something like premature old age.”—*Walter Pater*.

“What Coleridge did well was unique, but it was very little, and the volume we have from him influences us with all the sadness that a garden does in which two or three beautiful flowers rise and flower perfectly, but in which the rest are choked with weeds and run to seed. And to those who can compare the things of art with the things of soul and heart, the analogy has its own profound moral lesson. . . . Surely few men have ever loved mankind more than this large-hearted creature of the sunny mist. And inasmuch as he loved much, his faults are forgiven.”—*Rev. Stopford Brooke*.



"His soul fared forth (as from the deep home-grove  
 The father-songster plies the hour-long quest),  
 To feed his soul-brood hungering in the nest;  
 But his warm Heart, the mother-bird, above  
 Their callow fledgling progeny still hove  
 With tented roof of wings and fostering breast  
 Till the Soul fed the soul-brood. Richly blest  
 From Heaven their growth, whose food was Human Love.

"Yet ah! like desert pools that show the stars  
 Once in long leagues,—even such the scarce-snatched hours  
 Which deepening pain left to his lordliest powers:—  
 Heaven lost through spider-trammled prison bars.  
 Six years, from sixty saved! Yet kindling skies  
 Own them, a beacon to our centuries."

*Dante Gabriel Rossetti.*

"He has been admirably compared by Mr. Swinburne to a footless bird of paradise. Another great poet, Mr Swinburne's friend, Dante Rossetti, has a far different comparison, though here also to a bird, in his sonnet on Coleridge, and the lines are valuable, at least as containing a fragment of sound criticism." (Here follows the sonnet.) . . . "I conceive the leading point about Coleridge's work," wrote Dante Rossetti, 'is its human love'; and yet Rossetti least of all men could be insensible to its romantic beauty or the incantation of its verse. If we could express the whole truth about Coleridge, we must find some mode of reconciling the conception of him as the footless bird of paradise with our knowledge of his affluent and sweet humanity."—*Professor Dowden.*

"*Kubla Khan* does not belong to human life, and it stands alone for melody in English poetry. Whenever Coleridge rises into this exquisite melody in its perfection, he also rises into that subtilized imaginative world of thought, half supernatural, half natural, which was special to him, and which pervades *The Ancient Mariner*

and *Christabel* and a few other poems. The music and the sphere of the poem are partly beyond this world of ours. Yet in part they touch it."—*Rev. Stopford Brooke*.

It is only necessary to read Coleridge's poems attentively, and with some regard to the order of their production, to appreciate the value of the foregoing critical estimates. The early poems will be found extravagant in their sentiment, rhetorical and redundant in their expression. Occasionally, as in the *Songs of the Pixies*, and in that delicate fragment *Lewti*, there occur lines and phrases that seem to anticipate the elfin melodies of his riper maturity; but, as a whole, these early poems only survive on the strength of his later reputation. They serve at the most to show the general direction of his intellectual opinions, and to illustrate the singular effervescence of his sympathies.

Mr. Walter Pater has drawn attention to the sudden blossoming and the no less sudden decay of Coleridge's poetical powers. In swift succession upon his intimacy with Wordsworth, and, it is to be feared, in singular accord with his addiction to the opium habit, we find him producing poems that are absolutely unique in their kind, unparalleled and unapproached in English literature. With a like suddenness the flood of inspiration ebbed away, and for the thirty closing years of his life Coleridge's utterances in verse are fragmentary and unequal. "The cause of this decline and fall was opium eating," writes Mr. Stopford Brooke; and we are even justified in assuming that the stimulus of opium before his faculties grew jaded from its excessive use had not a little to do with the sudden and luxurious blossoming of his brief poetic season. The poetry of the years 1797-1798 stands markedly apart from and above the poetry

which immediately preceded it, and its charm is peculiarly derived from its supernormal qualities. The years which follow are marked by desultory and despairing efforts to regain this fugitive magic. "Opium gives and takes away," De Quincey said. "It defeats the steady habit of exertion; but it creates spasms of irregular exertion. It ruins the natural power of life; but it creates preternatural paroxysms of intermitting power. . . . We are of opinion that it killed Coleridge as a poet. Poetry can flourish only in the atmosphere of happiness. But subtle and perplexed investigations of difficult problems are among the commonest resources for beguiling the sense of misery."

This creative period of Coleridge's genius produced three of the most remarkable poems in the language, *Kubla Khan*, *The Ancient Mariner*, and *Christabel*, where his weird imagination explores the unearthly realms of the supernatural; and a number of only less remarkable poems, in which he gives expression to his ardent human sympathies, whether inspired by tranquil domestic incidents, as *This Lime Tree Bower my Prison*, *The Nightingale*, etc., or occasioned by the agitating political conditions of those unsettled times, as *France* and *Fears in Solitude*. His peculiar place among English poets is undeniably held by virtue of the three first-named poems; but Professor Dowden has done well to insist upon the excellence of those other poems which represent at once the human and the artistic side of his genius.

The qualities which have gained Coleridge his distinguished place among English poets are not difficult perhaps to analyze, yet we may never hope to have them reproduced by another poet with a like subtleness of instinct and in so perfect a fusion. He commands the regions of the supernatural, but at the same time he

makes his appeal to us from the region of human sympathies. The readers of his poetry will be surprised by the grace and suggestiveness of his allusions to Nature when, as in *This Lime Tree Bower*, he seeks to reproduce with delicate exactitude her subtler appearances of beauty, and will also be astonished to observe his power to evoke her grander attributes, as in the sublime exordium to the *Ode to France*, and in the passages of *The Ancient Mariner* which reproduce the free untrammelled aspects of the sea and sky.

It may be confidently said, in conclusion, that Coleridge fills an unique position among English poets. The verbal felicities of his diction, and the strangeness and beauty of his imagination, are his most distinctive claim to greatness. Yet his verse rarely rises from mere melody to the higher regions of poetic harmony. His instrument is a flute of incredible sweetness, but the organ roll of Milton gives forth a deeper and a richer sound. Again, his imaginative vision is unique, but it is at the same time abnormal and limited in range. He has not the emotional fervor which lyrical poetry demands, and his odes are the outcome rather of intellectual conviction than of passion. The *Ode to Dejection*, which draws its inspiration from the intensity of his despair, is the only poem in which we hear the genuine lyrical cry. His dramas are not successful, for he lacked constructive ability, and his metaphysical views of life disturbed his vision.

But whatever deductions we may find it necessary to make, nothing can alter the fact that Coleridge was and will remain a force in English literature. After his short creative career it was impossible for English poetry to relapse into the degenerate condition in which Coleridge found it, and from which Coleridge and Wordsworth labored successfully to set it free. To them we owe our

advance from the cramping artificiality of the eighteenth century; and though our poetry may again become over-cultivated and over-refined, the influence of these great poets will remain to point it permanently in its true direction.

#### COLERIDGE THE PHILOSOPHER

The religious and political philosophy of Coleridge, and his metaphysical theories in general, open up too wide a field for investigation here. A brief statement must therefore suffice. John Stuart Mill, the exponent of a very different philosophy, paid to Coleridge this tribute: "No one has contributed more to shape the opinions among younger men, who can be said to have any opinions at all." Although this generous estimate is not confined to his theological influence, it is nevertheless within the domain of religious thought that his philosophical teaching has proved most stimulating.

#### COLERIDGE AS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER

Coleridge's political views are represented by the Pantisocratic scheme in his revolutionary youth, and in his maturer years by his articles in the *Morning Post* of 1799-1802, and by the following works of a still later period: *Statesman's Manual* (1816), *Second Lay Sermon* (1817), *The Friend* (1818), and *Church and State* (1830).

Coleridge approached the French Revolution upon the intellectual rather than the emotional side, attracted by its specious return to first principles. He was never other than repelled by its savage abandonment to passion; and his *Ode to France*, or *The Recantation*, expresses the disillusionment which these excesses and this desertion of high ideals engendered in his mind.

The invasion of Switzerland by the revolutionary troops made permanent the alienation of his sympathies. Henceforward his contempt for France was associated with a distrust of all radical measures, and together with Wordsworth and Southey he adopted conservative theories that were almost reactionary in their scope. His conservatism is liberally interpreted by Professor Dowden as a desire "not to attempt to displace the old conceptions in politics and morals," but "to discover the vital center of each conception," and "to deliver this from the incrustations of custom and unilluminated tradition."

#### COLERIDGE AS A RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHER AND METAPHYSICIAN

Coleridge in his early years was a follower of Priestley in religion and of Hartley in philosophy. He was therefore a Unitarian, with marked tendencies toward materialism. He had, however, from his youth been strongly attracted by the philosophy of the mystics, and it was a revival of these tendencies which made him waver in his adherence to the materialistic theories of Hartley. He eagerly perused Berkeley, Leibnitz, and Spinoza without finding a secure foundation for his religious or philosophical faith. "I found myself all afloat. Doubts rushed in, broke upon me from the fountains of the great deep, and fell from the windows of heaven."

It was in this condition of spiritual bewilderment that he sought a refuge in Germany. He there fell under the influence of the German mystics, and vigorously perused the great modern systems of Kant and Schelling.

Coleridge is therefore not a thoroughly original philosopher. His chief originality lies in his fruitful application of these borrowed theories to the conditions of English religious thought.

He found religion in England dominated by the mechanical theories of Paley, and barely emerging from the comfortable deism of the eighteenth century. His life's work was devoted to making religion less purely mechanical, and lifting it to a higher moral and spiritual plane. Revelation resting upon miracles, and the existence of a God established by mechanical devices, had no appeal for him. Rather was his life a protest against this state of things; and in the nature of that protest against artificiality in the sphere of literature, morals, and religion, we find the true unity which binds his scattered work together. "In metaphysical speculation," writes Professor Dowden, "in ethics, in politics, in theology, in biblical criticism, in the criticism of literature, he suggested a new exposition of received formulas. He quickened the sense of religion by reducing or attempting to reduce dogma, imposed from without, to facts of the spiritual consciousness and their inner significance."

Coleridge's religious teaching, we may conclude, is in a large measure responsible alike for the Broad Church and the Tractarian movements of the middle of the nineteenth century. The dominant single influence in the English Church at that period, the Rev. F. D. Maurice, was confessedly a disciple of Coleridge.

#### COLERIDGE THE CRITIC

Literary criticism, like theology, had been mechanically inspired in the eighteenth century. Dryden had partially laid the foundations for a more generous system which should be at once comparative and historical in its scope. His liberal principles, however, had suffered collapse, and Dr. Johnson, the law-giver of the eighteenth century, was the incarnation of all that is arbitrary, dogmatic, and artificial in the judgment of literary pro-

ducts. His was the magisterial-dictatorial method, proceeding from the assumption of certain fixed laws which must imperatively be adhered to, or the literary result was worthless in his eyes. The weakness of the system lay in the arbitrary application to modern conditions of laws derived for the most part from a timid study of the lesser Latin poets. For Johnson therefore Milton's *Comus* was "a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive"; in *Lycidas* "the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers displeasing"; and the *Sonnets* "deserve not any particular criticism. For of the best it can only be said that they are not bad, . . . these little pieces may be dismissed without much anxiety." In Johnson's opinion the summit of poetic excellence had been reached in Pope. It was vain to expect a further development. "New sentiments and new images others may produce; but to attempt any further improvement of versification will be dangerous. Art and diligence have now done their best, and what shall be added will be the effort of tedious toil and needless anxiety."

Professor Herford concisely sums up the value of Coleridge's contribution to criticism as follows: "It was reserved for Coleridge and Carlyle to lay the foundations of the relative or historical method in criticism, with its attribute of catholic and many-sided sympathy. . . . Every true poem was thence by its very nature original; it presented universal truth under an absolutely individual form. It must therefore be judged, not by any external standard, but by the laws of the 'situation' from which it springs; and this can only be done when the critic imaginatively re-creates it in his mind, thinking the poet's thought after him, sympathetically entering into the whole process of its growth. It is the significance of the romantic criticism therefore to have



substituted for the absolute method of judging by reference to an external standard of 'taste,' a method at once imaginative and 'historical.'"\* "The change is significant. It makes the poet, not the critic, master of the situation. It implies that the critic is no longer to give the law to the poet; but that, in some sense more or less complete, he must begin, if not by putting himself in the place of the individual writer as he was when at work on the individual poem, at least by taking upon himself—by making his own as far as may be—what he may conceive to be the essential temperament of the poet."†

It is needless to say that though a spirit of unity pervades Coleridge's criticism, and binds it closely to other portions of his work, the criticism itself is presented in his usual formless and haphazard manner. The volume devoted to *Shakespeare and Other Dramatists* is the most coherent exposition of his views; but hardly surpasses in critical insight certain portions of the *Biographia Literaria*, the chapters more particularly which deal with the problem of Wordsworth's poetry.

Simultaneously with the German Schlegel, Coleridge undertook to destroy the prevailing French estimate of Shakespeare as a "barbarian of genius," "a model of Gothic extravagance," who reached occasional heights of sublimity despite his constant abandonment of the beaten paths of art. Coleridge never denied that the great dramatist sometimes wandered astray from paths which others had beaten; what he asserted was that he followed with implicit confidence the laws of his own intellect, that his judgment was in all respects commensurate with his genius, and that his work attains in consequence to

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\* C. H. Herford, *The Age of Wordsworth*, pp. 51, 52.

† C. E. Vaughan, *English Literary Criticism*, London, Blackie & Son, pp. lxxxii, lxxxiii.

an organic unity which eludes the pursuit of artificial investigation.

Into Coleridge's acute criticism of Wordsworth it is not necessary to enter. The *Biographia Literaria*, that curious medley of narrative, philosophy, and criticism, which contains his profound views upon his brother poet, interests the student of Coleridge's opinions more especially for its skillful application of his philosophical theories to the subject of literary criticism.

#### CONTEMPORARY OPINIONS ON THE ANCIENT MARINER

*The Ancient Mariner* was a puzzle to the critics of Coleridge's day, and a perplexing problem even to his own friends. Southey, impatient of its element of the marvelous, called it in *The Critical Review* "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity." *The New Monthly* characterized it as "the strangest cock and bull story that ever we saw." Wordsworth laid the blame on it for the failure of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and upon Coleridge's desire to withdraw it from the second edition wrote the following patronising note:

*Note to the Ancient Mariner.*—"I can not refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this Poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me; as the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem, and from a knowledge that many persons had been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions might be supposed himself to partake of some-

thing supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon; thirdly, that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images, and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, tho' the meter is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that meter, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely, that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the Poem a value which is not often possessed by better Poems. On this account I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it."

This complacent criticism drew from Lamb the following letter by way of rebuke:

"For me I was never so affected with any human tale. After first reading it I was totally possessed with it for many days. I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom Pipe's magic whistle. I totally differ from your idea that the Mariner should have had a character and profession. This is a beauty in *Gulliver's Travels*, where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the Ancient Mariner undergoes such trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was—like the state of a man in a bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone. Your other observation is, I think as well, a little unfounded. The Mariner, from being conversant in supernatural events, has acquired a super-

natural and strange cast of phrase, eye, appearance, etc., which frighten the wedding guest. You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that can not see."

The absolute uniqueness of the poem was realized by Coleridge himself alone in his generation. "*The Ancient Mariner* can not be imitated, nor the poem *Love*. They may be excelled; they are not imitable."

#### THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

The poem was first printed anonymously in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, with the title, *The*

*The text.* *Rime of the Ancyent Marinere, in Seven Parts*, and a brief prose argument prefixed.

The second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800, contained many important alterations in the text, besides a consistent modernizing of the antiquated spelling. The Argument was extended as follows: "How a Ship having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner, cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many strange Judgements; and in what manner he came back to his own Country." (The most interesting changes in the text are embodied in the notes of this present edition.) The poem was again reprinted in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1802 and 1805, without much change from the text of 1800, but with the omission of the Argument. Further changes were made in the poem before its next appearance in the *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817, when the marginal gloss and the motto from Burnet \*

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\* Thomas Burnet (?-1715) was master of the Charterhouse School and chaplain to William III. The extract in the motto is from his *Archæologiæ Philosophicæ*, a treatise on the *Origin of Things*.

were also added. Subsequent editions before and after the poet's death contained no modifications worthy of note.

*Facile credo*, etc. "I can easily believe that there are more Invisible than Visible beings in the Universe, . . .

*The motto.* but who will declare to us the family of all these, and acquaint us with the Agreements, Differences, and peculiar Talents which are to be found among them? [What is their work? Where are their dwelling-places?] It is true, Human Wit has always desired a knowledge of these things, though it has never yet attained it. . . . I will own that it is very profitable, sometimes to contemplate in the Mind, as in a Draught, the Image of the greater and better World; lest the Soul, being accustomed to the Trifles of this present Life, should contract itself too much, and altogether rest in mean Cogitations; but, in the mean Time, we must take Care to keep to the Truth, and observe Moderation, that we may distinguish Certain from Uncertain Things, and Day from Night." \*

The origin of *The Ancient Mariner* was described by Wordsworth to Miss Fenwick as follows: "In the autumn of 1797 [November] he (Coleridge), my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones, near to it. Accordingly we set off and proceeded along the Quantock Hills toward Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of *The Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which should

*Circumstances  
of composition.*

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\* Translation of second edition by Mead and Toxton, London, 1738.

bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterward delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages* a day or two before that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular,

"And listen'd like a three years' child:  
The Mariner had his will."

"These trifling contributions, all but one, which Mr. Coleridge has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded, slipped out of his mind, as well they might. As we endeavored to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog." \*

For Coleridge's more philosophical account of the

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\* *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, by Christopher Wordsworth, London, 1851, vol. i, pp. 107, 108; *Knight's Wordsworth*, vol. i, p. 198 f.

genesis of the poem we must turn to the fourteenth chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*:

"During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of Nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of the imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset, diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of Nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and the agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

"In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which it was agreed that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which

constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

"With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing, among other poems, the *Dark Ladie* and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems, written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published." —*Biographia Literaria*, chapter xiv.

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We thus observe the serious aim which stimulated the poet to the production of *The Ancient Mariner*. We do indeed receive the further hint that the immediate stimulus was the desire to earn five pounds, but that fact hardly comes within the scope of a literary inquiry. The external suggestions are very interesting. The dream of Coleridge's friend Cruikshank is responsible for the phantom ship; Wordsworth's suggestion,



based upon a passage in Shelvocke's *Voyage*, is responsible for the albatross; and Wordsworth again claims responsibility for the navigation of the ship by dead men. Cruikshank's dream has faded beyond power of recovery, but Shelvocke's *Voyage round the World* is still sufficiently easy of access. The passage describing the coast of Patagonia is as follows: "These (Pintado birds) were accompanied by *Albitrosses*, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some of them extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet." The superstitious fear attaching to the albatross as a bird of ill omen is described in another passage. Cape Horn has been rounded and Captain Shelvocke continues as follows: "One would think it impossible that anything living could subsist in so rigid a climate; and indeed, we all observed, that we had not had the sight of one fish of any kind, since we were come to the Southward of the streights of *le Mair*, nor one sea-bird, except a disconsolate black *Albitross*, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if lost himself, till Hatley (my second Captain), observing, in one of his melancholy fits, that the bird was always hovering near us, imagined from its colour, that it might be some ill omen. That which, I suppose, induced him the more to encourage his superstition, was the continued series of contrary tempestuous winds, which had oppress'd us ever since we had got into this sea. But be that as it would, after some fruitless attempts, at length, shot the *Albitross*, not doubting (perhaps) that we should have a fair wind after it."\*

We may accept Wordsworth's statement that he suggested to Coleridge the navigation of the mariner's ship by dead men. But the idea of revivifying them by a

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\* *A Voyage round the World*, by Capt. George Shelvocke, Lond., 1726, p. 72 f.

troop of angelic spirits was, according to a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1853, borrowed from a tale of shipwreck narrated by Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the fourth century. The old sailor of the story was the solitary survivor of a ship's crew. He lived in great peril and agony alone upon the sea for many days; but forthwith the ship was navigated by a "crew of angels," and "steered by the Pilot of the World . . . to the Lucanian shore"; the fishermen there saw a crew, whom they took for soldiers, and fled, but returned again when the old man showed them that he was alone, and towed him into harbor.

Finally, the *Athenæum* for March 15, 1890, contains a review of a book by Mr. Ivor James, *The Source of the Ancient Mariner* (Cardiff: Owen, 1890). The claim is here urged that Coleridge owed a great deal, especially in the nature of description, to an old book by a Captain Thomas James called the *Strange and Dangerous Voyage . . . in his intended Discovery of the North-west Passage into the South Sea*: London, 1633. Mr. Dykes Campbell considers it probable that Coleridge did, in fact, casually consult this book, and in the notes reference will be made to the possible borrowings, slight though they are. It is curious that this old book contains the idea of being brought home in a dream or trance, but this point Mr. James has overlooked. "For mine owne part, I give no credit to them at all; and as little to the vicious, and abusive wits of later *Portingals* and *Spaniards*: who never speak of any difficulties (i. e., in returning from the South Sea): as shoalde water, ice, nor sight of land: but *as if they had been brought home in a dreame or engine*," p. 107. In this connection, Mr. Dykes Campbell refers to Part VI of *The Ancient Mariner*, and quotes the marginal gloss: "The Mariner hath been cast into a trance: for the

angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward  
faster than human life could endure."

#### THE METER OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

The metrical line employed by Coleridge for this poem is technically known as the "septenarius." The second stanza will serve as a normal example of the type (*a* = accented, *x* = unaccented):

<sup><i>x</i></sup> The	<sup><i>a</i></sup> Bridegroom's	<sup><i>x</i></sup> doors	<sup><i>a</i></sup> are	<sup><i>x</i></sup> open	<sup><i>a</i></sup> wide,	$\left. \begin{array}{l} 4 \text{ accents} \\ 3 \text{ accents} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} 7 \text{ ac-} \\ \text{cents} \end{array}$
<sup><i>x</i></sup> And	<sup><i>a</i></sup> I	<sup><i>x</i></sup> am	<sup><i>a</i></sup> next	<sup><i>x</i></sup> of	<sup><i>a</i></sup> kin ;	
<sup><i>x</i></sup> The	<sup><i>a</i></sup> guests	<sup><i>x</i></sup> are	<sup><i>a</i></sup> met,	<sup><i>x</i></sup> the	<sup><i>a</i></sup> feast	$\left. \begin{array}{l} 4 \text{ accents} \\ 3 \text{ accents} \end{array} \right\} \begin{array}{l} 7 \text{ ac-} \\ \text{cents} \end{array}$
<sup><i>x</i></sup> May'st	<sup><i>a</i></sup> hear	<sup><i>x</i></sup> the	<sup><i>a</i></sup> merry	<sup><i>x</i></sup> din.	<sup><i>a</i></sup>	

The stanza, therefore, really consists of two lines each of seven feet, hence the name. The rime words naturally occur at the seventh foot. In the stanza, as here written, the second and fourth lines have a corresponding rime, whereas the first and third never rime with each other, although they may contain internal rimes—e. g., met: set. The departures from the regular type consist in the frequent introduction of unaccented syllables, chiefly in the introductory foot (as in lines 2 and 3 of the first stanza); and in the addition of lines, until the quatrain becomes a quintain, sometimes a sextain, and in one place is expanded to nine lines (ll. 203–211).

**THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER**

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit, et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quæ loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, numquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tamquam in tabula, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernæ vitæ minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.

T. BURNET, *Archæol. Phil.*, p. 68.

## ARGUMENT

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country. [1798.]

# THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

## IN SEVEN PARTS

### PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

An ancient  
Mariner  
meeteth  
three Gal-  
lants bidden  
to a wedding  
feast, and de-  
taineth one.

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,     5  
And I am next of kin;  
The guests are met, the feast is set:  
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
"There was a ship," quoth he.     10  
"Hold off! unhand me, graybeard loon!"  
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

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1. The abrupt opening is characteristic of ballad poetry.

3. **glittering**. Show the appropriateness of the word. See note on page 98.

7. Note the internal rime. Point out other examples. Observe the effectiveness of the contrast expressed in the opening stanzas—worldly joy on the one hand, spiritual mystery on the other.

10–12. Note the rich rime, *he: he*.

12. **Eftsoons** = *soon after, forthwith*.

The Wedding-Guest is  
spellbound  
by the eye of  
the old sea-  
faring man,  
and con-  
strained to  
hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—  
The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
15 And listens like a three years' child :  
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone :  
He cannot choose but hear ;  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
20 The bright-eyed Mariner.

“The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,  
Merrily did we drop  
Below the kirk, below the hill,  
Below the light-house top.

The Mariner  
tells how the  
ship sailed  
southward  
with good  
wind and fair  
weather, till  
it reached  
the Line.

25 The Sun came up upon the left,  
Out of the sea came he !  
And he shone bright, and on the right  
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,  
30 Till over the mast at noon—”  
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

13. **He holds**, etc. The mesmeric spell is complete, and there is no longer need to hold him with his hand, as in line 9.

15, 16. Contributed by Wordsworth.

18. **hear**. Loose rimes as *hear* : *mariner* are a common license in popular ballads. Point out other examples. Compare lines 38-40 for a repetition of lines 18-20 (another ballad characteristic). See also lines 588-590 for a recurrence to the same idea.

20. **The bright-eyed Mariner**. Epithets and figures are of the simplest and most conventional character in the old ballads. Is *bright-eyed* merely conventional here?

22. **drop**. Here used in the nautical sense—to put out to sea with the ebbing tide.

25 f. See the note on page 99 for Lowell's estimate of Coleridge's descriptive powers.

The bride hath paced into the hall,  
 Red as a rose is she ;  
 Nodding their heads before her goes  
 The merry minstrelsy.

The Wed-  
 ding-Guest  
 heareth the  
 bridal mu-  
 sic ; but the  
 35 Mariner con-  
 tinueth his  
 tale.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,  
 Yet he cannot choose but hear ;  
 And thus spake on that ancient man,  
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

40

" And now the Storm-blast came, and he  
 Was tyrannous and strong :  
 He struck with his o'ertaking wings,  
 And chased us south along.

The ship  
 driven by a  
 storm toward  
 the south  
 pole.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
 As who pursued with yell and blow  
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
 And forward bends his head,  
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
 And southward aye we fled.

45

50

And now there came both mist and snow,  
 And it grew wondrous cold :  
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
 As green as emerald.

---

37. *The Wedding-Guest he beat.* In the ballads, the repetition of the subject was not uncommon ; e. g.,

" Our king he kept a false stewarde."

*Sir Aldingar*, line 1 (*Percy's Reliques*).

45. *With sloping masts.* Analyze the figure in this stanza, and develop its full force.

46. *As who pursued.* Supply the antecedent. Its omission is archaic. Cf.:

" As who should say, ' I am Sir Oracle.' "

Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, I, i.

52-54. *cold : emerald.* 1798 edition, *could : emerauld.*



72 THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

The land of  
ice, and of  
fearful  
sounds,  
where no liv-  
ing thing was  
to be seen.

55 And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen :  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—  
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
60 The ice was all around :  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound !

Till a great  
sea-bird,  
called the  
Albatross,  
came  
through the  
snow-fog,  
and was re-  
ceived with  
great joy and  
hospitality.

At length did cross an Albatross :  
Thorough the fog it came ;  
65 As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,  
And round and round it flew.  
The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;  
70 The helmsman steered us through !

And lo! the  
Albatross  
proveth a  
bird of good  
omen, and  
followeth  
the ship as  
it returned  
northward,  
through fog  
and floating  
ice.

And a good south wind sprung up behind ;  
The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play,  
Came to the mariners' hollo !

75 In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,  
It perched for vespers nine ;

55. **And through the drifts.** The probable meaning is that the snow-capped icebergs sent a dreary light through the drifting mist and snow, or shed a "dismal sheen" upon the drifting ice-packs.—the **snowy clifts.** *Clifts* is a secondary form of *cliffs*, and probably influenced by *clift*, a secondary form of *cleft*.

56. **sheen.** Derive the word. Cf. line 314 for its use as an adjective.

57. **ken** = *to see*. More commonly a noun.

61. Note the onomatopœic effect.

64. **Thorough** = *through*. Cf. *thoroughfare*.

69. **thunder-fit.** A noise resembling thunder.

76. **vespers** = *evenings*. Latin *vesper*, evening star, evening. Cf. :

"Black vesper's pageants."

Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV, xiv, 8.

Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke  
 white,  
 Glimmered the white moon-shine."

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus!— 80  
 Why look'st thou so?"—"With my crossbow  
 I shot the Albatross.

The ancient  
 Mariner in-  
 hospitably  
 killeth the  
 pious bird of  
 good omen.

## PART II

The sun now rose upon the right:  
 Out of the sea came he,  
 Still hid in mist, and on the left 85  
 Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,  
 But no sweet bird did follow,  
 Nor any day, for food or play,  
 Came to the mariners' hollo! 90

And I had done a hellish thing,  
 And it would work 'em woe:  
 For all averred, I had killed the bird  
 That made the breeze to blow.  
 Ah, wretch! said they, the bird to slay, 95  
 That made the breeze to blow!

His ship-  
 mates cry  
 out against  
 the ancient  
 Mariner, for  
 killing the  
 bird of good  
 luck.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
 The glorious Sun uprist:

But when the  
 fog cleared  
 off, they jus-

77. *Whiles*. Cf. the adverbial "s" of *eftsoons*, line 12. It is an archaic ballad form.

79. *God save thee*. The dramatic force of the interruption gives added intensity to the confession wrung from the Mariner. What does the story gain by the character of the Wedding-Guest?

83. *The Sun now rose*. The course of the vessel is indicated by the same poetic expedient as above in lines 25 f.

97. *head*. State the grammatical relation of this word. Why did the sun previously rise "dim and red"?

tify the  
same, and  
thus make  
themselves  
accomplices  
in the crime.

Then all averred, I had killed the bird  
100 That brought the fog and mist.  
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,  
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair  
breeze con-  
tinues; the  
ship enters  
the Pacific  
Ocean, and  
sails north-  
ward, even  
until it  
reaches the  
Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow followed free;  
105 We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea.

The ship  
hath been  
suddenly  
becalmed.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be;  
And we did speak only to break  
110 The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the Moon.

115 Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Al-  
batross be-  
gins to be  
avenged.

Water, water, everywhere,  
120 And all the boards did shrink;

98. *uprist* = *uprose*. A Chaucerian form, and usually employed as a substantive.

101. The crew render themselves accomplices in crime.

103 f. Note the alliteration throughout this stanza.

107. *the sails dropt down*. This does not mean that they were lowered, for see lines 311, 312.

111-115. Note the accuracy and minuteness of the observation.

115. *Day after day*. What force does the repetition give to this passage? Cf. lines 119, 121, 125, 143 f., etc.

120. *And all the boards*. *And* is here equivalent to *and yet*. Cf.:

"Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death,  
And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?"

Shakespeare, *Richard III*, II, i.

Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be!  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs      125  
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout  
The death-fires danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green, and blue, and white.      130

And some in dreams assurèd were  
Of the spirit that plagued us so:  
Nine fathom deep he had followed us  
From the land of mist and snow.      A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor

angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And every tongue, through utter drought,      135  
Was withered at the root;  
We could not speak, no more than if  
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks  
Had I from old and young!      140  
Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
About my neck was hung.      The ship-mates in their sore distress would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

### PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat  
Was parched, and glazed each eye.  
A weary time! a weary time!      145  
How glazed each weary eye,

The ancient  
Mariner be-  
holdeth a  
sign in the  
element afar  
off.

When looking westward, I beheld  
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,  
150 And then it seemed a mist :  
It moved and moved, and took at last  
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !  
And still it neared and neared :  
155 As if it dodged a water-sprite,  
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer  
approach, it  
seemeth him  
to be a ship ;  
and at a dear  
ransom he  
freeth his  
speech from  
the bonds of  
thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
We could nor laugh nor wail ;  
Through utter drought all dumb we stood !  
160 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,  
And cried, A sail ! a sail !

A flash of  
joy ;

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
Agape they heard me call :  
Gramercy ! they for joy did grin,  
165 And all at once their breath drew in,  
As they were drinking all.

And horror  
follows.  
For can it be  
a ship that  
comes on-  
ward with-  
out wind or  
tide ?

See ! see ! (I cried) she tacks no more !  
Hither to work us weal ;  
Without a breeze, without a tide,  
170 She steadies with upright keel !

152. *wist* = *know*. (Cf. *I trow*.)

155. *dodged*. Comment on the use of the word here. Is it dignified ?  
What, in brief, was Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction?—*water-sprite*. *Sprite* is a doublet of *spirit*.

157. *with black lips baked*. Explain the appropriateness of the labials.

164. *Gramercy* = French *grand merci*, great thanks. An exclamation expressive of gratitude mingled with surprise.

166. *As they*. Supply the ellipsis.

170. *She steadies*, etc. She sails on an even keel.

The western wave was all aflame,  
 The day was well-nigh done!  
 Almost upon the western wave  
 Rested the broad bright Sun;  
 When that strange shape drove suddenly 175  
 Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,  
 (Heaven's Mother send us grace!)  
 As if through a dungeon-grate he peered  
 With broad and burning face. 180

It seemeth  
 him but the  
 skeleton of  
 a ship.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)  
 How fast she nears and nears!  
 Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,  
 Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the Sun  
 Did peer, as through a grate?  
 And is that Woman all her crew?  
 Is that a Death? and are there two?  
 Is Death that woman's mate?

185 And its ribs  
 are seen as  
 bars on the  
 face of the  
 setting Sun.  
 The Spectre-  
 woman and  
 her Death-  
 mate, and  
 no other on  
 board the  
 skeleton-  
 ship.

Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
 Her locks were yellow as gold:  
 Her skin was as white as leprosy,  
 The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,  
 Who thicks man's blood with cold.

190 skeleton-  
 ship.  
  
 Like vessel,  
 like crew!

The naked hulk alongside came,  
 And the twain were casting dice;

195 Death and  
 Life-in-  
 Death have

179, 180. Develop the force of the simile.

182. *How fast*, etc. The repetition expresses the relentless approach of the phantom ship.

184. *gossameres* = fine-spun cobwebs. Literally = goose-summer, alluding to the downy appearance of the film, and to the time of its appearance.

185 ff. See note on page 109 for Professor Dowden's comment with reference to the repression of gruesome detail.

diced for the  
ship's crew,  
and she (the  
latter) win-  
neth the an-  
cient Mari-  
ner.

No twilight  
within the  
courts of the  
Sun.

'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'  
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:  
200 At one stride comes the dark;  
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,  
Off shot the spectre-bark.

At the rising  
of the Moon,

We listened and looked sideways up!  
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,  
205 My life-blood seemed to sip!  
The stars were dim, and thick the night,  
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed  
white;  
From the sails the dew did drip—  
Till clomb above the eastern bar  
210 The hornèd Moon, with one bright star  
Within the nether tip.

One after  
another,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,  
Too quick for groan or sigh,  
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,  
215 And cursed me with his eye.

His ship-  
mates drop  
down dead.

Four times fifty living men,  
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)

198. and whistles thrice. For the superstitious force of these words, see note on page 110.

199, 200. The sudden closing in of night within the tropics is magnificently described in two brief lines.

204, 205. *Fear at my heart*, etc. Discuss the trope.

211. *Within the nether tip*. What poetic license exists here?

212. *by = under*.

213. *Too quick*. This has been explained according to its original meaning of "living," as in the expression "the quick and the dead." Anglo-Saxon *cwic*. It seems better to take it in its usual sense = *swiftly*, and to supply an ellipsis, such as, "they fell too *quick* for groan or sigh."

217. *Four times fifty*. A poetic periphrasis.

With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,  
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly—  
They fled to bliss or woe!  
And every soul, it passed me by,  
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!"

220 But Life-in-Death begins  
her work on  
the ancient  
Mariner.

## PART IV

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!  
I fear thy skinny hand!  
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

The Wed-  
ding-Guest  
225 feareth that  
a Spirit is  
talking to  
him;

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,  
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—  
"Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!  
This body dropt not down.

230 But the an-  
cient Mari-  
ner assureth  
him of his  
bodily life,  
and proceed-  
eth to relate  
his horrible  
penance.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
My soul in agony.

235

The many men, so beautiful!  
And they all dead did lie:

He despiseth  
the creatures  
of the calm.

218. **thump**: **lump**. What is the effect of the rime?

223. **my cross-bow**. The events of the poem did not therefore occur after the sixteenth century. Read carefully the quotation from Walter Pater (pages 110, 111), which discusses the supernatural element in *The Ancient Mariner*.

224. **I fear thee**, etc. Compare the Wedding-Guest's interruptions now with those at the outset.

226, 227. Contributed by Wordsworth.

234. **Never a** = *not one*.

236. **The many men**, etc. His soul is full of reproach that Death should be so ruthless and wanton in his choice of victims, while sparing himself, the chief offender, and the debased creatures of the slime.



~~And a thousand thousand slimy things  
Lived on; and so did I.~~

And envieth <sup>240</sup> I looked upon the rotting sea,  
that they should live,  
and so many lie dead. And drew my eyes away;  
I looked upon the rotting deck,  
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray;  
<sup>245</sup> But or ever a prayer had gusht,  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,  
And the balls like pulses beat;  
<sup>250</sup> For the sky and the sea, and the sea and  
the sky  
Lay like a load on my weary eye,  
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men. <sup>255</sup> The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
Nor rot nor reek did they:  
The look with which they looked on me  
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell  
A spirit from on high;

---

There is no regeneration possible for the heart which harbors contempt or pride.

244. I looked to heaven, etc. Why could the Mariner not pray? What spiritual significance may be attached to this? Cf. the King's speech in *Hamlet*:

"Pray can I not,  
Though inclination be as sharp as will:  
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent."  
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III, iii.

245. or ever = before ever.

245-247. gusht: dust. Imperfect rime.

254. reek. Literally, *smoke*, but here probably *smell*. Cf. German *riechen*, to smell.

But oh! more horrible than that  
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!  
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,  
And yet I could not die.

260

The moving Moon went up the sky,  
And no where did abide:  
Softly she was going up,  
And a star or two beside—

In his lone-  
liness and  
fixedness he  
yearneth  
toward the  
journeying  
Moon, and  
the stars  
that still so-

265

jour, yet still move onward; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,  
Like April hoar-frost spread;  
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
The charmed water burnt alway  
A still and awful red.

270

Beyond the shadow of the ship  
I watched the water-snakes:  
They moved in tracks of shining white,  
And when they reared, the elfish light  
Fell off in hoary flakes.

By the light  
of the Moon  
he beholdeth  
God's crea-  
tures of the  
great calm.

275

Within the shadow of the ship  
I watched their rich attire:

261. *Seven days*, etc. Cf. note on line 2, page 98.

263 f. Do these lines, which attribute a healing power to Nature, correspond with the view expressed in the *Ode to Dejection*, especially stanza iv? Read the comment of the Rev. Stopford Brooke, page 114.

267-281. These lines show a strong romantic feeling for color. Who are the great masters of color in English poetry? What other fine color effects are there in this poem?

270. *charmed*. Latin *carmen*. Explain the force of the word here in connection with its derivation.

271. *red*. What is the syntactical relation of this word?

Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,  
 280 They coiled and swam; and every track  
 Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty  
 and their  
 happiness.

He blesseth  
 them in his  
 heart.

The spell  
 begins to  
 break.

O happy living things! no tongue  
 Their beauty might declare:  
 A spring of love gushed from my heart,  
 285 And I blessed them unaware!  
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
 And I blessed them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray;  
 And from my neck so free  
 290 The Albatross fell off, and sank  
 Like lead into the sea.

## PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,  
 Beloved from pole to pole!  
 To Mary Queen the praise be given!  
 295 She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,  
 That slid into my soul.

By grace of  
 the holy  
 Mother, the  
 ancient Mar-  
 iner is re-  
 freshed with  
 rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,  
 That had so long remained,  
 I dreamt that they were filled with dew;  
 300 And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,  
 My garments all were dank;

282 ff. Consult the note on page 113.

290. *The Albatross fell off.* With what may this be compared in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*?

297. *silly* = *blessed*. Shortened from early modern English *seely*, German *selig*.

300. *And when, etc.* Observe the metrical movement of this line.

Sure I had drunken in my dreams,  
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs : 308  
I was so light—almost  
I thought that I had died in sleep,  
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind :  
It did not come anear ;  
But with its sound it shook the sails,  
That were so thin and sere.

He heareth  
sounds, and  
310 seeth strange  
sights and  
commotions  
in the sky  
and the ele-  
ment.

The upper air burst into life !  
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,  
To and fro they were hurried about ! 315  
And to and fro, and in and out,  
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,  
And the sails did sigh like sedge ;  
And the rain poured down from one black 320  
cloud ;

The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
The Moon was at its side :  
Like waters shot from some high crag,  
The lightning fell with never a jag, 325  
A river steep and wide.

---

303. **drunken.** Archaic as participle.

309 f. These strange commotions in Nature portend the reanima-  
tion of the lifeless bodies.

314. **fire-flags.** Poetical and archaic for *lightning*.—**sheen.** See line  
56, note.

318-326. See Rev. Stopford Brooke's comment on page 114.

321. **The Moon,** etc. Note the effective contrast.

322. **The thick,** etc. Comment on the verbal harmony of this line.

324-326. Discuss these lines as to meaning and form.

The bodies  
of the ship's  
crew are in-  
spired, and  
the ship  
moves on.

The loud wind never reached the ship,  
Yet now the ship moved on!

Beneath the lightning and the Moon

330 The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,  
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;  
It had been strange, even in a dream,  
To have seen those dead men rise.

335 The helmsman steered, the ship moved on ;  
Yet never a breeze up blew ;  
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,  
Where they were wont to do ;  
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—

340 We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son  
Stood by me, knee to knee :  
The body and I pulled at one rope,  
But he said nought to me.”—

But not by  
the souls of  
the men, nor  
by daemons  
of earth or  
middle air,  
but by a  
blessed troop  
of angelic  
spirits, sent  
down by the  
invocation of  
the guardian  
saint.

345 “ I fear thee, ancient Mariner ! ”

“ Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest !

’Twas not those souls that fled in pain,  
Which to their corses came again,  
But a troop of spirits blest :

350 For when it dawned—they dropped their  
arms,

And clustered round the mast ;  
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their  
mouths,  
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,

355 Then darted to the Sun ;

Slowly the sounds came back again,  
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky  
I heard the sky-lark sing;  
Sometimes all little birds that are, 360  
How they seemed to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute;  
And now it is an angel's song, 365  
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on  
A pleasant noise till noon,  
A noise like of a hidden brook  
In the leafy month of June, 370  
That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,  
Yet never a breeze did breathe:  
Slowly and smoothly went the ship, 375  
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,  
From the land of mist and snow,  
The spirit slid: and it was he  
That made the ship to go. 380  
The sails at noon left off their tune,  
And the ship stood still also.

The lone-  
some spirit  
from the  
south pole  
carries on  
the ship as  
far as the  
Line, in obe-  
dience to the  
angelic  
troop, but

382. *jargoning*. Old French *jargon*, the singing of birds.

387-372. These lines, with their gentle melody, reveal Coleridge's power over the musical resources of our language. The words themselves have the murmuring flow of a hidden brook. The peacefulness and continuity of the ship's motion could not be more felicitously described.

382. See the note on page 115.

still requir-  
eth ven-  
geance.

The Sun, right up above the mast,  
Had fixed her to the ocean :  
385 But in a minute she 'gan stir,  
With a short uneasy motion—  
Backwards and forwards half her length  
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,  
390 She made a sudden bound ;  
It flung the blood into my head,  
And I fell down in a swoond.

The Polar  
Spirit's fel-  
low-demons,  
the invisible  
inhabitants  
395 of the ele-  
ment, take  
part in his  
wrong; and  
two of them  
relate, one to  
the other,  
that penance  
long and  
heavy for the  
ancient Mar- 400  
iner hath  
been accord-  
ed to the  
Polar Spirit,  
who return-  
eth south-  
ward.

How long in that same fit I lay,  
I have not to declare ;  
395 But ere my living life returned,  
I heard and in my soul discerned  
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man ?  
By him who died on cross,  
With his cruel bow he laid full low,  
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself  
In the land of mist and snow,  
He loved the bird that loved the man  
405 Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,  
As soft as honey-dew :  
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,  
And penance more will do.'

394. **I have not**, etc. = I have not power to.

395. **living life**. In contrast with his former Life in Death.

397. **Two voices**. These voices probably represent Justice and Mercy.  
Justify this statement.

407. **honey-dew**. Drops of sugary substance found on the leaves and  
stems of plants.

## PART VI

## FIRST VOICE

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,  
 Thy soft response renewing—  
 What makes that ship drive on so fast?  
 What is the Ocean doing?' 410

## SECOND VOICE

'Still as a slave before his lord,  
 The Ocean hath no blast;  
 His great bright eye most silently  
 Up to the Moon is cast—' 415

If he may know which way to go;  
 For she guides him smooth or grim.  
 See, brother, see! how graciously  
 She looketh down on him.' 420

## FIRST VOICE

'But why drives on that ship so fast,  
 Without or wave or wind?'

## SECOND VOICE

'The air is cut away before,  
 And closes from behind.' 425

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!  
 Or we shall be belated:  
 For slow and slow that ship will go,  
 When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

I woke, and we were sailing on  
 As in a gentle weather: 430

The Mariner  
 hath been  
 cast into a  
 trance; for  
 the angelic  
 power caus-  
 eth the ves-  
 sel to drive  
 northward  
 faster than  
 human life  
 could en-  
 dure.

The super-  
 natural  
 motion is

418. Supply the ellipsis.

426 f. See note on page 116.



retarded ;  
the Mariner  
awakes, and  
his penance  
begins anew.

'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high,  
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,  
435 For a charnel-dungeon fitter :  
All fixed on me their stony eyes,  
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
Had never passed away :  
440 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,  
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is  
finally expi-  
ated.

And now this spell was snap : once more  
I viewed the ocean green,  
And looked far forth, yet little saw  
445 Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turned round walks on,  
And turns no more his head ;  
450 Because he knows, a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,  
Nor sound nor motion made :  
Its path was not upon the sea,  
455 In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek  
Like a meadow-gale of spring—

452. *But soon*, etc. Compare this with the wind described in lines 309 f.

457. *Like a meadow-gale of spring*. A sea-image redolent of the land and memories of home. See the note on lines 318 f., page 114.

It mingled strangely with my fears,  
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship, 460  
Yet she sailed softly too:  
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—  
On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed And the an-  
The light-house top I see? 465cient Mariner  
Is this the hill? is this the kirk? beholdeth  
Is this mine own countree? his native  
country.

We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,  
And I with sobs did pray—  
O let me be awake, my God! 470  
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbor-bay was clear as glass,  
So smoothly it was strewn!  
And on the bay the moonlight lay,  
And the shadow of the Moon. 475

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,  
That stands above the rock:  
The moonlight steeped in silentness  
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light, 480  
Till rising from the same,

458. *It mingled strangely*, etc. The Mariner is not quite sure whether to dread this wind or not. He remembers his former experience.

464 f. Compare lines 21 f. The evolution of the poem is completed. See note on page 117.

478. *steeped in silentness*. The peacefulness of this scene, in marked contrast with the unrest which had gone before, is reiterated in the next line of this stanza, and in the stanza which follows, e. g., line 479, *The steady weathercock*, and line 480, with *silent light*.

The angelic  
spirits leave  
the dead  
bodies,

Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
In crimson colors came.

And appear  
in their own  
forms of  
light.

A little distance from the prow  
488 Those crimson shadows were :  
I turned my eyes upon the deck—  
Oh, Christ ! what saw I there !

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,  
And, by the holy rood !

490 A man all light, a seraph-man,  
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :  
It was a heavenly sight !  
They stood as signals to the land,

495 Each one a lovely light ;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand ;  
No voice did they impart—  
No voice ; but oh ! the silence sank  
Like music on my heart. .

500 But soon I heard the dash of oars,  
I heard the Pilot's cheer ;  
My head was turned perforce away,  
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,

505 I heard them coming fast :  
Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy  
The dead men could not blast.

482, 483.

that shadows were  
In crimson colors.

Note the forcible antithesis. Point out other examples of verbal antithesis in *The Ancient Mariner*, and of color contrasts in general.

489. *And, by the holy rood !* A ballad oath. rood = cross.

502. *My head, etc.* The angelic power constrained him.

I saw a third—I heard his voice :  
 It is the Hermit good !  
 He singeth loud his godly hymns  
 That he makes in the wood.  
 He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away  
 The Albatross's blood.

510

## PART VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood  
 Which slopes down to the sea.  
 How loudly his sweet voice he rears !  
 He loves to talk with mariners  
 That come from a far countree.

The Hermit  
of the Wood.

515

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—  
 He hath a cushion plump :  
 It is the moss that wholly hides  
 The rotted old oak-stump.

520

The skiff-boat neared : I heard them talk,  
 'Why this is strange, I trow !  
 Where are those lights so many and fair,  
 That signal made but now ?'

525

'Strange, by my faith !' the Hermit said—  
 'And they answered not our cheer !  
 The planks look warped ! and see those sails  
 How thin they are and sere !

Approach-  
eth the ship  
with wonder.

530

. 512. *shrieve*. An obsolete form of *shrive*.

Part VII. Read the note carefully on pages 118–120.

514. **This Hermit good**. It is especially appropriate that the Mariner's sin should be absolved by one enveloped in such sanctity. The student should indicate by reference to the text the character which Coleridge intended to bestow upon the Hermit.

519–522. Develop the ironical force of this stanza.

525. **Where are**, etc. Cf. lines 494, 495.

530. **How thin**, etc. Cf. line 312.

I never saw aught like to them,  
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag  
My forest-brook along;  
535 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,  
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below  
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—  
(The Pilot made reply)  
540 I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'  
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,  
But I nor spake nor stirred;  
The boat came close beneath the ship,  
545 And straight a sound was heard.

The ship  
suddenly  
sinketh.

Under the water it rumbled on,  
Still louder and more dread:  
It reached the ship, it split the bay;  
The ship went down like lead.

The ancient  
Mariner is  
saved in the  
Pilot's boat.

550 Stunned by the loud and dreadful sound,  
Which sky and ocean smote,

532. Observe the *enjambement* or run-on line from one stanza to the next.

533. **Brown skeletons**, etc. Show how this simile is especially natural here. How do lines 535-537 affect the simile?

535. **ivy-tod**. A thick bush, usually of ivy.

537. **That eats**. What is the antecedent of "that"?

540. **a-feared**. Distinguish carefully by derivation *a-feared* and *afraid*.

549. **The ship went down like lead**. This line is a striking example at once of the simplicity and economy of Coleridge's diction. A reference to the introduction will show that the original vice of his style was turgidity and diffuseness. Was Coleridge justified in thus getting rid of his ship?

Like one that hath been seven days drowned  
 My body lay afloat;  
 But swift as dreams, myself I found  
 Within the Pilot's boat.

555

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,  
 The boat spun round and round;  
 And all was still, save that the hill  
 Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked  
 And fell down in a fit;  
 The holy Hermit raised his eyes,  
 And prayed where he did sit.

560

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,  
 Who now doth crazy go,  
 Laughed loud and long, and all the while  
 His eyes went to and fro.  
 'Ha, ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,  
 The Devil knows how to row.'

565

And now, all in my own countree,  
 I stood on the firm land!  
 The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,  
 And scarcely he could stand.

570

'O, shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'  
 The Hermit crossed his brow.  
 'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—  
 What manner of man art thou?'

The ancient  
 Mariner  
 earnestly en-  
 treateth the  
 575 Hermit to  
 shrieve him;  
 and the pen-  
 ance of life  
 falls on him.

558, 559. And all was still, etc. This is a Wordsworthian touch. Examine the passages in this poem which describe sound. Do they argue delicacy of perception?

564-567. I took the oars, etc. We have here one of the many inimitable touches in the poem. The quiet unobtrusive line, which tells of the Pilot's boy "who now doth crazy go," reveals with startling force the terrifying aspect of the Mariner.

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched  
 With a woful agony,  
 580 Which forced me to begin my tale ;  
 And then it left me free.

And ever  
 and anon  
 throughout  
 his future  
 life an agony  
 constraineth  
 him to travel 585  
 from land to  
 land.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,  
 That agony returns ;  
 And till my ghastly tale is told,  
 This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land ;  
 I have strange power of speech ;  
 That moment that his face I see,  
 I know the man that must hear me :  
 590 To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door !  
 The Wedding-Guests are there :  
 But in the garden-bower the bride  
 And bride-maids singing are :  
 595 And hark the little vesper bell,  
 Which biddeth me to prayer !

O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been  
 Alone on a wide wide sea :  
 So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
 600 Scarce seemèd there to be.

585. Discuss the simile.

591. **What loud uproar**, etc. Walter Pater observed that the unity of *The Ancient Mariner* was "secured in part by the skill with which the incidents of the marriage feast are made to break in dreamily from time to time upon the main story." Can you assign any further significance to the recurrence of these sounds of marriage festival?

595, 596. **And hark**, etc. What do these lines indicate with reference to *The Ancient Mariner*?

597-600. **O Wedding-Guest !** etc. Develop the significance of these lines.

O, sweeter than the marriage-feast,  
 'Tis sweeter far to me,  
 To walk together to the kirk  
 With a goodly company !—

To walk together to the kirk, 605  
 And all together pray,  
 While each to his great Father bends,  
 Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
 And youths and maidens gay !

Farewell, farewell ! but this I tell 610  
 To thee, thou Wedding-Guest !  
 He prayeth well, who loveth well  
 Both man and bird and beast.

And to teach  
 by his own  
 example love  
 and rever-  
 ence to all  
 things that  
 God made  
 and loveth.

He prayeth best, who loveth best  
 All things both great and small ; 615  
 For the dear God who loveth us,  
 He made and loveth all."

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
 Whose beard with age is hoar,  
 Is gone : and now the Wedding-Guest 620  
 Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,  
 And is of sense forlorn :  
 A sadder and a wiser man,  
 He rose the morrow morn. 625

1797-1798

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601-617. *O sweeter*, etc. On the basis of these lines, and by reference to the poem as a whole, comment upon the *human* character of the ancient Mariner himself. Keep in mind Wordsworth's opinion as quoted on page 57, to the effect that the Mariner possesses no definite character, whether in his human or nautical capacity.

623. *forlorn*. *Deprived*. Archaic in this sense.

624. *Sadder*. What is the force of this word here ?



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

## NOTES

### ON THE TEXT OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

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THE system of teaching which employs a beautiful poem primarily as a basis for a lesson in etymology is to be deprecated. The object of the editor has been to discuss only words of peculiar interest or of importance in the text. Elsewhere reference may be made to our excellent modern dictionaries—*The Century Dictionary*, whose derivations are very reliable, and Murray's still incomplete *New English Dictionary*.

#### PART I

The struggle of the Wedding-Guest against the overmastering influence of the Mariner is here depicted, and the ultimate surrender to his magnetic sway. Sounds from the outer world obtrude themselves in the opening stanzas, but before the close they fall idly on the ears of the Wedding-Guest. The spell of the weird story is upon him. An exquisite poetic effect is gained in lines 30 f. by the image of the bride as she paced into the hall: but the spell remains unbroken. It will be observed that the interruptions of the Wedding-Guest at the outset are impatient, and for the purpose of thwarting the narrative. The interruptions which follow are the result of fear and fascination.

We need not spoil the simple beauty of the poem by the premature intrusion of philosophical interpretations. Let the student first read the poem for the delight in reading it, and when the hour for reflection comes an added pleasure will doubtless accrue, for some minds at least, from the discovery of hidden spiritual meanings, even at the risk of making the poem more difficult than it was meant to be. For a brief discussion of this question of philosophical significance, see opening note to Part VII.

1. *ancient*. The word usually suggests time long past. In the poem the action probably relates to a remote period, but the word itself here rather refers to the advanced age of the narrator—the Old Navigator, as Coleridge loved to call him. "It was a delicate thought to put the

weird tale, not into the author's own mouth, but into that of an ancient mariner, who relates it with dreamy recollection."—Brandl, page 202.

2. *one of three.* Three and seven are mystic numbers, and seem for that reason adopted throughout the poem; e. g. :

"And listens like a three years' child." (Line 15.)

"Quoth she, and whistles thrice." (Line 198.)

"Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse." (Line 261.)

It is probably by coincidence that the poem consists of seven parts. Compare also Rossetti's description of the Blessed Damsel :

"She had three lilies in her hand  
And the stars in her hair were seven."

A reference to lines 586 f. will show that there was a further significance in the singling out of one particular individual—"one of three."

3. *By thy long gray beard.* Observe the art of this indirect description involved in the progress of the narrative. Compare other instances of personal description in the poem, especially lines 79 f., where the agony on the Mariner's face is reflected in the terrified words of the Wedding-Guest. The custom of swearing by the beard is not uncommon in old literature.

"Touch. Swear by your beards that I am a knave.

Cel. By our beards, if we had them, thou art."

Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I, ii.

9-12. *He holds him*, etc. The edition of 1798 reads :

"But still he holds the Wedding-Guest—

There was a Ship, quoth he—

'Nay, if thou'st got a laughsome tale,  
Marinere! come with me!'

"He holds him with his skinny hand,

Quoth he, there was a Ship—

'Now get thee hence, thou gray-beard Loon!  
Or my Staff shall make thee skip.'"

Is the new version an improvement?

11. *loon.* Not to be confused with *loon* (a corruption of *loom*), the name of an aquatic bird. This is the explanation usually given. Our present word is Middle English *lowne*, meaning "a stupid fellow." Cf.

"The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!"

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V, iii.

13. *He holds him*, etc. Observe the repetition of the phrase, *He holds him*, from line 9, and notice the constant effective repetitions throughout. Repetition is extremely common in ballad literature, but

even in other poems than *The Ancient Mariner* it had developed into a mannerism with Coleridge. Compare also Edgar Allan Poe.

21 f. For the joyousness of a ship's departure compare Tennyson's *The Voyage*.

The evolution of Coleridge's poem is very perfect. In line 465 the return to the old familiar landmarks brings joy to the old man's heart :

"Oh ! dream of joy ! is this indeed  
The light-house top I see ?  
Is this the hill ? is this the kirk ?  
Is this mine own countree ?"

23. kirk. This is the northern form still surviving in Scotland of the Anglo-Saxon *cyric*, which became *church* in Midland and Southern English. It is significant, in view of the occasional touches of Northern dialect in *The Ancient Mariner*, to note that the borderland was the primitive home of the ballad. "There is scarcely an old historical song or ballad, wherein a minstrel or harper appears, but he is characterized by way of eminence to have been 'of the north countrey.'"—Percy, *Essay on the Ancient Minstrelsy*.

25 f. Note the naked simplicity of this description. Lowell has very ably analyzed the charm of Coleridge's descriptions in the following passage, the excellence of which is an excuse for its length : "Coleridge has taken the old ballad measure and given to it, by an undefinable charm wholly his own, all the sweetness, all the melody and compass of a symphony. And how picturesque it is in the proper sense of the word. I know nothing like it. There is not a description in it. It is all picture. Descriptive poets generally confuse us with multiplicity of detail ; we can not see their forest for the trees ; but Coleridge never errs in this way. With instinctive tact he touches the right chord of association, and is satisfied, as we also are. I should find it hard to explain the singular charm of his diction, there is so much nicety of art and purpose in it, whether for music or meaning. Nor does it need any explanation, for we all feel it. The words seem common words enough, but in the order of them, in the choice, variety, and position of the vowel sounds, they become magical. The most decrepit vocable in the language throws away its crutches to dance and sing at his piping. I can not think it a personal peculiarity, but a matter of universal experience, that more bits of Coleridge have imbedded themselves in my memory than of any other poet who delighted my youth—unless I should except the sonnets of Shakespeare. This argues perfectness of expression. Let me cite an example or two :

'The sun's rim dips, the stars rush out,  
At one stride comes the dark ;  
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea  
Off shot the spectre barque.'

Or take this as a bit of landscape :

'Beneath yon birch with silver bark  
And boughs so pendulous and fair,  
The brook falls scattered down the rock,  
And all is mossy there.'

It is a perfect little picture, and seems so easily done. But try to do something like it. Coleridge's words have the unashamed nakedness of Scripture, of the Eden of diction ere the voluble serpent had entered it. This felicity of speech in Coleridge's best verse is the more remarkable because it was an acquisition. His earlier poems are apt to be turgid ; in his prose there is too often a languor of profuseness, and there are pages where he seems to be talking to himself and not to us, as I have heard a guide do in the tortuous caverns of the Catacombs when he was doubtful if he had not lost his way. But when his genius runs freely and full in his prose, the style, as he said of Pascal, 'is a garment of light.' He knew all our best prose and knew the secret of its composition. When he is well inspired, as in his best poetry he commonly is, he gives us the very quintessence of perception, the clearly crystallized precipitation of all that is most precious in the ferment of impression after the impertinent and obtrusive particulars have evaporated from the memory. It is the pure visual ecstasy disengaged from the confused and confusing material that gave it birth. It seems the very beatitude of artless simplicity, and is the most finished product of art. I know nothing so perfect in its kind since Dante."—Lowell, *Works*, vol. vi, pp. 74, 75.

Coleridge's power as a descriptive poet is touched upon elsewhere (see page 114). Simplicity is everywhere its prevailing quality, and an effort should be made to impress this upon the student by textual reference. In this stanza the loneliness which suddenly enveloped the ship is impressively conveyed.

32. *the loud bassoon*. Mr. Dykes Campbell has the following note on this: "During Coleridge's residence at Stowey his friend Poole reformed the church choir, and added a bassoon to its resources. Mrs. Sanford (*T. Poole and his Friends*, i, 247) happily suggests that this 'was the very original and prototype of the *loud bassoon* whose sound moved the Wedding-Guest to beat his breast.'"

34. *Red as a rose*. A common comparison in ballads, where alliterative similes and expressions are very frequent; e. g., "green as . . . glass," *Lin.*, 10; "green as . . . grass," *Maur.*, 7. Cf. also,

"Her cheeks were like the roses red."

Dowsabell, line 92 (*Percy's Reliques*).

"His lippen reed as rose."

Chaucer, *The Tale of Sir Thopas*.

41-54. In the place of these lines the 1798 edition reads:

45. "Listen, Stranger! Storm and Wind,  
A Wind and Tempest strong!  
For days and weeks it play'd us freaks—  
Like Chaff we drove along.

"Listen, Stranger! Mist and Snow—  
50. And it grew wond'rous cauld;  
And Ice mast-high came floating by  
As green as Emerald."

For lines 45-50 of the 1798 edition the text of the 1800 edition substitutes:

"But now the North wind came more fierce,  
There came a Tempest strong!  
And Southward still for days and weeks  
Like chaff we drove along.

"And now there came both Mist and Snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold."

There is a progressive improvement in these alterations, and a still later revision gives us the splendid figure contained in lines 45-50.

51-70. *And now there came*, etc. Mr. Ivor James in the *Athenæum* for March 15, 1890, quotes a number of parallels from Captain James's *Northwest Passage*, as a proof that Coleridge drew some of his descriptions from that source (see also Dykes Campbell, *Coleridge's Works*, page 597): "All day and night it snow'd hard" (page 11). 'The nights are very cold; so that our rigging freezes' (page 15). 'It proved very thick fowle weather, and the next day, by two a Clocke in the morning, we found ourselves encompassed about with Ice' (page 6). 'We had Ice not farre off about us, and some pieces as high as our Top-mast-head' (page 7). 'The seventeenth . . . we heard . . . the rutt against a banke of Ice that lay on the Shoare. It made a hollow and hideous noyse, like an over-fall of water, which made us to reason amongst ourselves concerning it, for we were not able to see about us, it being darke night and foggie' (page 8). 'The Ice . . . crackt all over the Bay, with a fearfull noyse' (page 77). 'These great pieces that came a grounde began to breake with a most terrible thundering noyse' (page 12). 'This morning . . . we unfastened our Ship, and came to sail, steering betwixt great pieces of Ice that were a grounde in 40 fad., and twice as high as our Top-mast-head' (page 14)."

82. *Like noises in a swound*. So (except *of* for *in*) in the 1798 edition. In 1800 the reading was,

"A wild and ceaseless sound."

The earlier reading was properly restored. The comparison of these muffled noises to the sound of the pulsing arteries in a condition of

syncope is very expressive.—*swound*. Derived from *swoun* with excrescent *d*. Compare the “*d*” in *sound*, *round*.

63. **Albatross**. The article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* contains interesting information. The derivation of the word is curious. The correct form would be *alcatras*, of Spanish or Portuguese derivation from an Arabic original, *al*, the, and *gadás*, bucket, applied to the pelican because it was supposed to carry water in its pouch. The first syllable, *alc-*, was changed to *alb-*, perhaps owing to the Latin *albus*, white, for albatrosses are of that color. All the European languages have adopted the *alb-* form. (On the superstition, see page 64.)

64. **Thorough**, from Anglo-Saxon *thurh*. Cf. *borough* < *burh*, and *furrow* < *furh*. “Thorough” is therefore a proper derivative form, and “through” a corruption.

67. **It ate the food it ne'er had eat**. The 1798 edition reads:

“The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms.”

Do you consider the revised text the better reading?

82. **I shot the albatross**. Mr. Sykes, in his edition of *The Ancient Mariner*, has the following note: “Bassett quotes a sailor speaking of an albatross: ‘If you shoot one and kill him, you may look out for squalls; but to catch him and let him die on deck is a different thing altogether.’”—*Legends*, etc., page 449.

## PART II

The gloss forms a sufficient commentary upon the progress of the story in this second part. The crime is accomplished, the wanton slaying of a harmless creature, and retribution follows swift behind. The Mariner is first blamed by his comrades, but when a fair breeze rises to speed them on their northward voyage they approve the deed, and thus become accomplices in crime. The fifth stanza is remarkable. The sudden stagnation that checks the ship's exultant speed offers a wonderful poetic contrast. Nothing could excel in its kind the description which follows.

87. **And the good south wind**. Cf. lines 91 and 92 for the use of “and” as an introductory word. It is a peculiarity of ballad diction; e. g.:

“And he cast a lease upon his backe,  
And he rode to the silver wood,  
And there he sought all about,  
About the silver wood,” etc.

*Childe Maurice*, Gummere, page 192.

92. ‘em is not really a contraction of them, but a survival of Middle English *hem*, Anglo-Saxon *heom*, the dative plural of the third personal pronoun.

95 and 96, which balance lines 101 and 102, were not in the early editions.

104. *The furrow followed free.* Mr. Dykes Campbell has the following note upon this line: "In *Sibylline Leaves* the line was printed,

'The furrow streamed off free.'

And Coleridge put this footnote, 'In the former edition the line was,

'The furrow follow'd free.'

But I had not been long on board a ship before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern.' But in 1828 and after the old line was restored." Justify your preference for either line.

117, 118. The image contained in these lines is deservedly famous. Mr. Sykes says in his edition: "The representation of figures in action, in painting and sculpture, is frequently referred to by the poets to indicate *arrested action*;" e. g.:

"His sword,

. . . seemed i' the air to stick:

So as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,

And like a neutral to his will and matter

Did nothing." Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II, ii.

123-130. *The very deep did rot*, etc. This, with some allowance for poetic exaggeration, fairly accurately represents the condition of the sea in the tropics after a prolonged calm. Compare the following passage, with which Coleridge was surely familiar: "During a calm on the morning of the 2d some parts of the sea seemed covered with a kind of slime, and some small sea animals were swimming about, the most conspicuous of which were of the gelatinous or Medusa kind, almost globular; and another sort smaller, that had a white or shining appearance, and were very numerous. Some of these last were taken up and put into a glass cup with some salt water, in which they appeared like small scales or bits of silver when at rest in a prone situation. When they began to swim about, which they did with equal ease upon the back, sides, or belly, they emitted the brightest colors of the most precious gems, according to their position with respect to the light. Sometimes they appeared quite pellucid, at other times assuming various tints of blue, from a pale sapphire to a deep violet color, which were frequently mixed with a ruby or opaline redness, and glowed with a strength sufficient to illuminate the vessel and water. These colors appeared most vivid when the glass was held to a strong light, and mostly vanished on the subsiding of the animals to the bottom, when they had a brownish cast. But with candle light the color was chiefly a beautiful pale green, tinged with a burnished gloss; and in the dark



it had a faint appearance of glowing fire."—*A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, by Captain James Cook (London, 1784), Book III, chapter xiii.

An earlier poem of Coleridge's contains lines which suggest line 125 :

"What time after long and pestful calms,  
With slimy shapes and miscreated life  
Poisoning the vast Pacific."

Coleridge, *The Destiny of Nations*.

127. *About, about*, etc. There seems to be a hint in this passage of the witches' song in *Macbeth* :

"The weird sisters, hand in hand,  
Posters of the sea and land,  
Thus do go about, about."

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, I, iii, 32 f.

128. *The death-fires*. "Among the superstitious this name, as also *corpse candles*," *dead men's candles* and *fetch-lights*, "was given to certain phosphorescent lights that appeared to issue from houses or arise from the ground. It was believed that they foretold death, and that the course they took marked out the road that the dead body was to be carried for burial," etc.—Charlotte Latham, *Folklore Record*.

129. *like a witch's oils*. Oil used in incantations was mingled, in order to make the scene more impressive, with substances which produced a colored flame.

139. *well-a-day*. Altered by analogy with "day," from *wellaway*, Middle English *welaway*, Anglo-Saxon *wā lā wā*, an exclamation of distress, *wā*, woe; *lā*, lo; *wā*, woe. It is a very common ballad expression.

The Gloss. 131 f. *Josephus*, A. D. 37–100 (?). A celebrated Jewish historian. At the outbreak of the Judeo-Roman war he was appointed governor of Galilee, and took an active part in the war. He afterward entered into the service of the Emperors Vespasian and Titus. In Rome he composed the *History of the Jewish War*, in seven books, and also *The Antiquities of the Jews*.

*Psellus*, 1020–1110 (?), was born in Constantinople, where he was called the "Prince of Philosophers." His works are numerous, consisting of commentaries on Aristotle and treatises on the occult sciences. Coleridge has reference to his *Dialogue on the Operation of Demons*.

### PART III

The marvels accumulate in this third part, but, like the Wedding-Guest, we "can not choose but hear." The intensity with which the poet depicts the supernatural brings it vividly before our imagination, and "by sheer vividness of imagery, and terse vigor of descriptive phrase," he obtains our imaginative assent to the weird details of the narrative. We believe because we see.

143. **There passed**, etc. This third part has been subjected to the most conscientious and successful revision on the poet's part. The original readings for the opening lines were:

Edition 1798—

"I saw a something in the sky,  
No bigger than my fist;  
At first it seem'd a little speck  
And then it seem'd a mist:  
It mov'd and mov'd, and took at last  
A certain shape I wist."

Edition 1802-1805—

"So past a weary time; each throat  
Was parch'd and glazed each eye,  
When, looking westward, I beheld  
A something in the sky.

"At first," etc.

Let the student compare these variant readings and criticise them. What is the special value of the repetition in the present text?

152. **I wist**. This has the appearance of being an archaic preterite from the preterite present verb *wit*, M. E. *witen*, A.-S. *witan*, to know; but it is more probably a corruption of A.-S. *gewiss*, certainly, indeed, M. E. *gywiss*, *i-wiss*, which became *I wist* by confusion with the above preterite.

155. **water-sprite**. Water-sprites are described by Heywood as—

"Spirits that have o'er water gouvernement,  
Are to Mankinde alike malevolent:  
They trouble Seas, Floods, Rivers, Brookes, and Wels,  
Meeres, Lakes, and love t' inhabit watery Cels."  
Heywood, *Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels*, book viii.

161. **A sail! a sail!** Mr. Sykes has a valuable note on this passage: "The description of the skeleton ship constantly suggests the phantom ship of maritime superstition. Marryat's version of *The Phantom Ship* is well known. The original story is that of a Dutch captain who swore he would round Cape Horn against a head gale. The storm increased; he swore the louder; threw overboard those who tried to dissuade him; cursed God, and was condemned to sail on forever, without hope of port or respite. Bechstein, *Deutsches Sagenbuch*, gives a different version, which has features in common with *The Ancient Mariner*. Falkenberg, for murder of his brother, is condemned to sail a spectral bark, attended only by his good and his evil spirit, who play dice for his soul. Playing dice (cf. line 196) with Death or the Devil, for a man's soul, is a superstition that often figures in mediæval art.

"The notion that the ship could sail in spite of wind and tide (line 169) is common to all accounts of the phantom ship; e. g.:

'Or of that Phantom Ship, whose form  
Shoots like a meteor through the storm;  
When the dark scud comes driving hard,  
And lowered is every topsail yard,  
And canvas, wove in earthly looms,  
No more to brave the storm presumes!  
Then, 'mid the war of sea and sky,  
Top and topgallant hoisted high,  
Full spread and crowded every sail,  
The Demon Frigate braves the gale;  
And well the doom'd spectators know  
The harbinger of wreck and woe.'

Scott, *Rokeby*, II, ii.

"The appearance of the phantom ship in *The Ancient Mariner* is likewise followed by disaster (line 212 ff.). See also Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, *The Ballad of Carmilhan*; Bassett, *Legends . . . of the Sea and Sailors*."

164. **they for joy did grin.** "I took the thought of 'grinning for joy' from my companion's [Berdmore, of Jesus College, Cambridge] remark to me, when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were nearly dead with thirst. We could not speak, from the constriction, till we found a little puddle under a stone. He said to me, 'You grinned like an idiot!' He had done the same!"—*Table Talk*, May 13, 1830 (second edition).

169. **Without a breeze, etc.** 1798—

"Withouten wind, withouten tide."

178. (**Heaven's Mother send us grace!**) An imitation of old ballad refrains. These refrains were of different kinds, sometimes being quite meaningless and of the nature of a burden merely to mark time, as *Hey derry down, O lilly lally*, etc. Sometimes again the words are articulate, but strung together with no apparent sense, as, for example, in *Riddles Wisely Expounded*:

"There was a Knicht riding frae the east—  
Jennifer gentle and rosemarie—  
Who had been wooing at monie a place—  
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree."

And finally the refrain has sometimes more or less reference to the story, as in *The Two Sisters*:

"He has ta'en three locks o' her yellow hair—  
Binnorie, O Binnorie—

And wi' them strung his harp sae rare—  
By the bonnie mill-dams of Binnorie."

Modern balladists have employed both the articulate and the meaningless refrain. As for the former, cf. Tennyson in *The Sisters*:

"We were two sisters of one race,  
The wind is howling in turret and tree;  
She was the fairer in the face,  
O the Earl was fair to see."

Jean Ingelow and Rossetti, as in *Sister Helen, Troy Town, Eden Bower*, have by preference employed the latter, an affectation cleverly parodied by the late Mr. C. S. Calverley:

"The auld wife sat at her ivied door  
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese),  
A thing she had frequently done before;  
And her spectacles lay on her aproned knees.

"The farmer's daughter hath soft brown hair.  
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese).  
And I met with a ballad, I can't say where,  
Which wholly consisted of lines like these."

179, 180. Note the graphic force of the simile here. The stanza begins with a metaphorical allusion. Still, we are so accustomed to the term "bars," as applied to level lines of clouds, that the metaphor passes as a plain statement. The idea of bars, by the principle of association which is at the bottom of all great poetry, suggested the image of a dungeon grate, which by the same process of association led to the personification of the sun peering through its prison bars "with broad and burning face." The same idea is still working in the poet's mind in lines 185 f., but with a transferred reference to the vessel's hollow ribs instead of the low horizon clouds.

185. The changes in the text from this point are so radical that the early edition must be quoted for purposes of comparison.

1798 edition:

"Are those *her* naked ribs, which fleck'd  
The sun that did behind them peer?  
And are those two all, all the crew,  
That woman and her fleshless Pheere?"

\* 1800 edition:

"Are those *her* Ribs, thro' which the Sun  
Did peer, as thro' a grate?  
And are those two all, all her crew,  
That Woman, and her Mate?"

"His bones were black with many a crack,  
 All black and bare, I ween ;  
 Jet-black and bare, save where with rust  
 Of mouldy damps and charnel crust  
 They're patch'd with purple and green.

"Her lips are red, *her* looks are free,  
*Her* locks are yellow as gold :  
 Her skin is as white as leprosy,  
 And she is far liker Death than he ;  
 Her flesh makes the still air cold.

"The naked Hulk alongside came,  
 And the Twain were playing dice ;  
 'The Game is done ! I've won, I've won !'  
 Quoth she, and whistled thrice.

"A gust of wind sterte up behind  
 And whistled thro' his bones ;  
 Thro' the holes of his eyes and the hole of his mouth  
 Half-whistles and half-groans.

"With never a whisper in the Sea,  
 Off darts the Spectre-ship ;  
 While clombe above the Eastern bar  
 The horned Moon, with one bright Star  
 Almost atween the tips.

"One after one by the horned Moon  
 (Listen, O Stranger ! to me)  
 Each turned his face with a ghastly pang  
 And curs'd me with his ee.

"Four times fifty living men,  
 With never a sigh or groan,  
 With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,  
 They dropp'd down one by one.

"Their souls did from their bodies fly,—  
 They fled to bliss or woe ;  
 And every soul it pass'd me by  
 Like the whizz of my Cross-bow."

There is a manuscript correction by Coleridge of the first stanza quoted above of the 1798 edition, as follows :

"Are those *her* ribs which fleck'd the Sun  
 Like bars of a dungeon grate ?  
 Are these two all, all of the crew,  
 That woman and her mate ?"

The correspondence with line 179 of our text is more remarkable here.

Mr. Dykes Campbell adds another stanza, "which was found added, in the handwriting of the poet, on the margin of a copy of the Bristol [1798] edition of *Lyrical Ballads* :

'This ship it was a plankless thing,  
A bare Anatomy !  
A plankless Spectre—and it moved  
Like a being of the Sea !  
The woman and a fleshless man  
Therein sate merrily.' "

In comparing the two full versions the toning down of the gruesome element is particularly to be noticed. The following words of Professor Dowden are apposite to this portion of the poem : " Relying largely, as he did in his poems which deal with the supernatural, on the effect produced by their psychological truth, Coleridge could afford to subdue the supernatural, and refine it to the utmost. . . . More important than truth physical he felt truth psychological to be. And attaining this, he did not need, as ' Monk ' Lewis\* did, to drag into his verse all the horrors of the churchyard and the nether pit of Hell. . . . Again, in *The Ancient Mariner*, where the specter bark approaches the doomed ship, and the forms of Death and Life-in-Death are visible playing at dice for the mariner and his companions, a verse full of charnel abominations occurs in the original text (two stanzas, in fact), which was afterward judiciously omitted. Coleridge felt that these hideous incidents of the grave only detracted from the finer horror of the voluptuous beauty of his White Devil, the nightmare Life-in-Death."—Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, pages 338 ff.

193. **The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she.** "She it was, this Life-in-Death, who with her numbing spell haunted Coleridge himself in after days."—Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, page 340.

Compare Coleridge's own epitaph :

"O lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.  
That he who many a year with toil of breath  
Found death in life, may here find life in death."

It is strange that the expression in the poem should not rather have been Death-in-Life.

198. **and whistles thrice.** Whistling at sea is sure to bring on a storm, runs the sailors' superstition. "Our sailors, I am told, at this very day (I mean the vulgar sort) have a strange opinion of the devil's power and agency in stirring up winds, and that is the reason they so seldom whistle on shipboard, esteeming it to be a mockery, and consequently an enraging of the devil."—Dr. Pegge, *Gentleman's Magazine*,

\* A contemporary of Coleridge's, and author of supernatural romances. His chief work, *The Monk*, accounts for his title.

1763.—*thrice*, in addition to riming with "dice," is used for its superstitious significance. It is the favorite number for invocations.

"Thrice to the holly brake—  
 Thrice to the well—  
 I bid thee awake  
 White Maid of Avenel!"

**Scott, *The Monastery.***

201 ff. The gruesomeness of the situation here reaches a climax. Mr. Dykes Campbell has the following note: "Among some papers of Cole-ridge, dated variously from 1806, 1807, and 1810, there exists, undated, the following recast of these lines :

“With never a whisper on the main  
Off shot the specter ship :  
And stifled words and groans of pain  
Mix'd on each murmuring trembling lip.

“And we look’d round, and we look’d up,  
And fear at our hearts, as at a cup  
The Life-blood seem’d to sip—  
The sky was dull, and dark the night,  
The helmsman’s face by his lamp gleam’d bright,  
From the sails the dews did drip—  
Till clomb above the Eastern Bar,  
The horned moon, with one bright star  
Within its nether tip.”

210, 211. **The horned Moon.** "It is a common superstition among sailors that something evil is about to happen whenever a star dogs the moon" (manuscript note by Coleridge). "But," adds Mr. Campbell, "no sailor ever saw a star within the nether tip of a horned moon." This error was not committed by Coleridge in the 1798 edition, where the reading is, "Almost atween the tips."

**222, 223. And every soul, etc.** The souls in leaving the bodies make an angry noise in the Mariner's guilty ears. It is superstitiously held that the soul may be seen and heard sometimes while leaving the body. Cf. Tennyson :

**"The gloomy brewer's [Cromwell's] soul  
Went by me like a stork."**

Tennyson, *The Talking Oak*, 55.

**And Rossetti :**

“And the souls mounting up to God  
Went by her like thin flames.”

Rossetti, *The Blessed Damozel*.

The impression of the supernatural conveyed by this and the following parts of the poem is skillfully analyzed by Walter Pater. "Fancies of

the strange things which may very well happen, even in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, from the story of the stealing of Dionysius downward, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvelous inventions. This sort of fascination *The Ancient Mariner* brings to its highest degree: it is the delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvelous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable. The too palpable intruders from a spiritual world in almost all ghost literature, in Scott and Shakespeare even, have a kind of crudity or coarseness. Coleridge's power is in the very fineness with which, as by some really ghostly finger, he brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are—the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiriting of the dead corpses of the ship's crew. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has the plausibility, the perfect adaptation to reason, and the general aspect of life, which belongs to the marvelous, when actually presented as part of a credible experience in our dreams. Doubtless the mere experience of the opium-eater, the habit he must almost necessarily fall into of noting the more elusive phenomena of dreams, had something to do with that; in its essence, however, it is connected with a more purely intellectual circumstance in the development of Coleridge's poetic gift. . . . The modern mind, so minutely self-scrutinizing, if it is to be affected at all by a sense of the supernatural, needs to be more finely touched than was possible in the older romantic presentment of it. . . . It is this finer, more delicately marvelous supernaturalism, fruit of his more delicate psychology, that Coleridge infuses into romantic adventure, itself also then a new or revived thing in English literature; and with a fineness of weird effect in *The Ancient Mariner*, unknown in those older, more simple, romantic legends and ballads. It is a flower of mediæval or later German romance, growing up in the peculiarly compounded atmosphere of modern psychological speculation, and putting forth in it wholly new qualities. The quaint prose commentary, which runs side by side with the verse of *The Ancient Mariner*, illustrates this—a composition of quite a different shade of beauty and merit from that of the verse which it accompanies, connecting this, the chief poem of Coleridge, with his philosophy, and emphasizing therein that psychological interest of which I have spoken, its curious soul-lore.”

## PART IV

The gloss forms here the only perfect commentary. The first two stanzas interrupt the narrative for the purpose of preventing monotony, and to reveal the effect of this weird story upon the Wedding-Guest. The next stanza relates the Mariner's utter desolation of spirit, and this



and the stanzas which follow are usually considered the crucial part of the poem from the philosophical standpoint. The interpretation lies upon the surface. There is no real mystery about it. With unuttered contempt in his heart for the lowly creatures of the deep, he seeks to pray and can not. He despises them that in their debased form they live on, while on the deck lie dead "the many men so beautiful." Through days and nights he feels their curse on his soul, but "in his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth toward the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward." It is a beautiful reflection of Wordsworth's teaching that Nature can redeem us and restore us to our higher selves. Involuntarily he blesses the swimming creatures which he had before despised. This spontaneous sympathy presents itself in marked contrast with the wanton and equally thoughtless cruelty which prompted him to shoot the unoffending Albatross.

"The selfsame moment I could pray;  
And from my neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank  
Like lead into the sea."

Here lies, if anywhere, the allegory.

226, 227. *And thou art long*, etc. "For the last two lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth" (note of Coleridge). Compare,

"Ribb'd like the sand at mark of sea."

*Lord Soulis (Border Minstrelsy).*

Note the direct description in this stanza. How does Coleridge generally obtain his effects of human description in the poem?

234. 1798 edition. "And Christ would take no pity on." This line, as it originally stood, was adduced by a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in partial proof of the theory that Coleridge had consulted a story narrated by Paulinus, Bishop of Nola. The story is that a pagan sailor, the solitary survivor of a disabled ship's crew, lived alone upon the sea in great peril, and that Christ at last took pity on his soul and converted him. The resemblance is exceedingly slight.

242. *rotting*. 1798 edition *eldritch*.

263-272. After commenting on the exquisite beauty and truth of this passage, the Rev. Stopford Brooke adds: "But Coleridge is uncontent to leave the description of the sky without throwing around it the light of the higher imagination, and it is characteristic of the quaint phantasy which belonged to his nature that he puts the thoughts which lift the whole scene into the realm of the imagination into the prose gloss at the side—and it is perhaps the loveliest little thought in all his writings."

273. *water-snakes*. "Coleridge seems to have consulted various zoölogical works, for the notebook of this date contains long paragraphs upon alligators, boas, and crocodiles of antediluvian times."—Brandl, *Coleridge*, page 202.

274. *tracks of shining white.* An allusion to the phosphorescence of the sea occasioned by innumerable animalculæ. Cf. :

"Awaked before the rushing prow,  
The mimic fires of ocean glow,  
Those lightnings of the wave;  
Wild sparkles crest the broken tides,  
And flashing round, the vessel's sides  
With elvish lustre lave," etc.

Scott, *Lord of the Isles*, I, xxi.

And compare his note on the passage. Cf. also :

"At times the whole sea burn'd, at times  
With wakes of fire we tore the dark."

Tennyson, *The Voyage*.

282 ff. *O happy living things*, etc. "It is through a sudden welling forth of sympathy with their happiness, and a sudden sense of their beauty, that the spell which binds the afflicted mariner is snapped. That one self-centered in crude egoism should be purified and converted through a new sympathy with suffering and sorrow is a common piece of morality; this purification through sympathy with joy is a piece of finer and higher doctrine."—Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, page 341. It will be observed that this expiation through spontaneous sympathy consorts with the original offense of wanton cruelty. It has been pointed out that Nature (according to Wordsworth's teaching) had already by her restful beauty prepared the mariner's mind for this access of pure and noble emotion. Its method of manifesting itself by a tender sympathy with animal life is characteristic of romantic poetry. As Brandl (page 97) remarks, "The more the landscape poets of what may be called the century of humanity penetrated into the secrets of earth and air, the more they sympathized with the lower creatures of Nature, and demanded for all and each a fitting lot." What other poets of Coleridge's time and preceding him had shown this new kind of sympathy?

288 ff. *I could pray*, etc. The modern humanitarian idea of the efficacy of sympathy is involved in this stanza with the mediæval notion that prayer brought release from the obsession of demons and curses.

## PART V

The climax of the story was reached in line 287 of Part IV. What follows in this portion is a result and not a cause. The gruesome element, especially in the stanza lines 341-344, is wonderfully presented, and the exquisite poetry of lines 367-372 is justly celebrated. The poem now becomes invaded more than ever by mystical allegorical figures.

291. *Oh, sleep!* For other invocations to sleep, compare Shakespeare, *II Henry IV*, III, i; *Macbeth*, II, ii; Sidney, *Sonnet on Sleep*; Daniels's *Sonnet to Sleep* (see Sharp's *Sonnets of this Century*, page lviii); Wordsworth, *Sonnets to Sleep*; etc.

312. *That were so thin and sere.* Cf. Shelvocke's *Voyage*: "At best our sails and rigging were hardly ever fit to cope with a brisk gale, and were now grown so very thin and rotten."

318-326. The Rev. Stopford Brooke, comparing this description of a tropical squall with the peacefulness of lines 367 ff., writes as follows: "In both these descriptions, one of the terror, the other of the softness of Nature, a certain charm, of the source of which we are not at once conscious, is given by the introduction into the lonely sea of images borrowed from the land, but which exactly fit the sounds to be described at sea; such as the noise of the brook and the sighing of the sedge. We are brought into closer sympathy with the mariner by this subtle suggestion of his longing for the land and its peace. And we ourselves enjoy the travel of thought, swept to and fro without any shock—on account of the fitness of illustration and thing—from sea to land, from land to sea."

322. *The thick black cloud, etc.* 1798 edition reads:

"Hark! hark! the thick black cloud is cleft."

Such ejaculations here and elsewhere (cf. "Listen, Stranger"—note on lines 41-54) are revised in later editions, with an added gain in impressiveness and dignity.

327-330. *The loud wind never reached the ship, etc.* Edition 1798:

"The strong wind reach'd the ship: it roar'd  
And dropp'd down like a stone!  
Beneath the lightning and the moon  
The dead men gave a groan."

334 ff. *The helmsman steered, etc.* See Introduction (pages 61, 64) for the history of this idea of navigating the vessel by the dead seamen. As a supplement to the passage from Paulinus, already quoted, note the following: "Sometimes, indeed, it was vouchsafed to him to behold an armed band—one may suppose of heavenly soldiers—who kept their watches on the deck and acted in all points as seamen."

337. *'gan.* Cf. line 385. The apostrophe is due to the unwarranted supposition that the word is an abbreviated form of "began." It is in direct succession from Middle English *ginnen*, preterite *gan*, Anglo-Saxon *onginnan*, and is quite common in ballads and old English poetry generally.

341-344. To this stanza were added the following two lines in 1798 edition:

"And I quak'd to think of my own voice,  
How frightful it would be!"

345-349. *I fear thee*, etc. This stanza was not in the 1798 edition.

350. *they dropped their arms*. In the text as we now have it "they" refers to spirits, or at least appears to. In the old text the reference was to line 339.

According to tradition ghosts depart at break of day. Spirits are frequently reported to have disappeared with sounds of music. Contrast this with the angry departure of the seamen's souls in lines 222, 223.

372. In the text of 1798 four stanzas immediately followed, which only served to mar the imaginative harmony of the picture, and were consequently removed in the 1800 edition :

"Listen, O listen, thou Wedding-Guest!"

'Marinere! thou hast thy will:

For that which comes out of thine eye doth make

My body and soul to be still.'

"Never sadder tale was told

To a man of woman born;

Sadder and wiser, thou Wedding-Guest!

Thou'lt rise to-morrow morn.

"Never sadder tale was heard

By a man of woman born;

The Mariners all returned to work

As silent as before.

"The Mariners all 'gan pull the ropes,

But look at me they n'old:

Thought I, I am as thin as air

They cannot me behold."

382. *And the ship stood still also*. The ship has now ceased sailing northward impelled by the South Polar spirit who has guided it. Beyond this limit he evidently is powerless to go. The Sun fixes the ship to the Ocean for a minute when she begins to move:

"Backwards and forwards half her length

With a short uneasy motion,"

for we must imagine that the Polar spirit does not care to relax his hold until his vengeance is assured. However, the angelic protecting spirits seem to be victorious:

"Then like a pawing horse let go,

She made a sudden bound."

The gloss to lines 377 ff. involves curious contradictions. The marginal commentary to lines 103-106 indicates that the ship had *then* reached the Line on the voyage north. This appears to be contradicted from lines

328, 335, 367 f., 373 f., which imply that the vessel is still sailing northward from the position described in 103 ff.

392. **And I fell**, etc. The meter of this line is irregular and scarcely pleasing. The edition of 1798 reads:

"And I fell into a swoond."

399. **By him who died on cross**. A common ballad oath. Cf.:

" 'This is a mery mornnyng,' seid Litull John,  
'Be hym that dyed on tre' " (cross).

*Robin Hood and the Monk*, lines 13-14.

407. **honey-dew**. For this interesting word see the *Century Dictionary*. Cf. Coleridge in his *Kubla Khan*:

" . . . Close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise."

## PART VI

414-417. **Still as a slave**, etc. Mr. Dykes Campbell has the following note: "Borrowed half from C.'s own *Osorio*,

'Oh, woman,

I have stood silent like a slave before thee,"

and half from Sir John Davies,

'For lo the sea that fleets about the land,  
And like a girdle clips her solid waist,  
Music and measure both doth understand:  
For his great chrystal eye is always cast  
Up to the moon, and on her fixèd fast.'"

*Orchestra; or, A Poem on Dancing*.

428-429. **Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!** These lines are not fully clear. We can only form a doubtful surmise as to why the spirits must fly higher, and why they would otherwise be belated. The assumption is that they are bound for some far-off celestial goal, and if from curiosity they tarried longer in the lower regions of the air they would be retarded beyond the due time. It is perhaps more poetically satisfying to permit the existence of some mysteries that can not be explained in this poem.

446-451. Coleridge in English poetry, and Victor Hugo in French poetry, possessed this faculty of evoking the supernatural dread of the unknown. It is far other and higher in its essence than the crude methods employed to arouse alarm by the "graveyard poets" and prose writers of the eighteenth century.

## 455. In ripple or in shade. Cf. :

"And the wind  
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves."  
Shelley, *Alastor*, 309, 310.

And cf. :

"Little breezes, dusk, and shiver."  
Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott*.

464 f. "This unexpected gentle conclusion brings our feet back to the common soil with a bewildered sweetness of relief and soft quiet after the prodigious strain of mental excitement which is like nothing else we can remember in poetry. . . . Thus we are set down on the soft grass, in a tender bewilderment, out of the clouds."—Mrs. Oliphant.

"How pleasantly, how reassuringly, the whole nightmare story is made to end among the clear, fresh sounds, and lights of the bay where it began."—Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 101.

467. **countree**. Old French *contrée*, Pop. Lat. *contrata*, from L. *contra*, i. e., lying over against, that which is opposite one. Cf. German *Genend* from *gegen*.—1798 edition *countrée*. To our modern ears this sounds like a case of wrenched accent, but there is no doubt that originally the last was the stress-bearing syllable in this word, as in many others where we should not so expect it. Among modern poets Rossetti and Mr. Swinburne obtain many curious and often legitimate metrical effects by this unusual placing of the accent; e.g. :

"Nothing is better, I well think  
Than love; the hidden well-water  
Is not so delicate to drink :  
This was well seen of me and her."  
Swinburne, *The Leper*.

Naturally, examples might be multiplied from the old ballads.

## 475. There occur in the 1798 edition the following five stanzas :

"The moonlight bay was white all o'er,  
Till rising from the same  
Full many shapes that shadows were,  
Like as of torches came.

"A little distance from the prow  
Those dark-red shadows were ;  
But soon I saw that my own flesh  
Was red as in a glare.

"I turn'd my head in fear and dread,  
And by the holy rood,  
The bodies had advanced, and now  
Before the mast they stood.

"They lifted up their stiff right arms,  
 They held them strait and tight;  
 And each right arm burnt like a torch,  
 A torch that's borne upright.  
 Their stoney eye-balls glittered on  
 In the red and smoky light.

"I pray'd and turn'd my head away  
 Forth looking as before.  
 There was no breeze upon the bay,  
 No wave against the shore."

Examine these lines critically in their proper place—viz., between lines 475 and 476. Estimate the reasons which actuated Coleridge to omit them in the 1800 edition.

503. **And I saw a boat appear.** 1798 edition continues:

"Then vanish'd all the lovely lights;  
 The bodies rose anew:  
 With silent pace each to his place,  
 Came back the ghastly crew.  
 The wind, that shade nor motion made,  
 On me alone it blew.

The editor of Macmillan's edition of 1877-80 says that in a copy of 1798 "Coleridge put his pen through the stanza and wrote on the margin:

'Then vanish'd all the lovely lights,  
 The spirits of the air,  
 No souls of mortal men were they,  
 But spirits bright and fair.' "

It will be observed that the substance of this was incorporated in the added stanza, lines 345-349.

## PART VII

The task of the poet increases in difficulty with this sudden return to normal conditions. He shows consummate skill in effecting the most difficult transition in the poem from the world of mystery and wonder to the world of human reality. "The ship went down like lead," and the Mariner returns once more to the busy haunts of men. Memories of his strange and awful spiritual experience still stir within him, and at uncertain hours the ancient agony returns, until he finds some chosen mortal whom he must chasten by his tale of sin and suffering, and redeem even in a thoughtless hour of mirth to a consciousness of the seriousness of life. As the tale draws to a close the joyous uproar bursts from the open door:

"The Wedding-Guests are there:  
 But in the garden-bower the bride

And bride-maids singing are :  
 And hark the little vesper-bell,  
 Which biddeth me to prayer !”

This is an evidence that the Ancient Mariner has found redemption at last ; and then follows the poignant stanza in which the whole story is lifted to the spiritual plane, to express, as it has rarely been expressed before, the isolation of a soul in sin :

“ O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been  
 Alone on a wide wide sea :  
 So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
 Scarce seemed there to be.”

We can not doubt that in these wonderful lines Coleridge has given expression also to his own strivings after spiritual truth.

Though possessed of a fanatic's earnestness the Mariner still retains his homely sympathies, his simple affections ; and the touch of naturalness in the stanza which follows makes the story of his weird adventures seem more reliable :

“ O sweeter than the marriage-feast,  
 'Tis sweeter far to me,  
 To walk together to the kirk  
 With a goodly company.”

The noises of the wedding-feast have broken in harmlessly upon the narrative ; we must be deaf to the world for a season in our moods of spiritual effort and attainment ; but the sweet charities of human intercourse again resume their sway :

“ To walk together to the kirk,  
 And all together pray,  
 While each to his great Father bends,  
 Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
 And youths, and maidens gay.”

Despite all the fantastic incident and romantic glamour of his work, we must conclude with Dante Rossetti that “ the leading point about Coleridge's work is its human love.”

So much for the element of humanity in the poem. The lesson of love and charity to man and beast is even more strongly enforced in the next two stanzas, with too much insistence even, if we trust Coleridge's own statement. “ Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired *The Ancient Mariner* very much, but that there were two faults in it—it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that that might admit some question ; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that in my own judgment the poem had too much ; and that the only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was *the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader* as a principle or cause of action in a work of such



pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the *Arabian Nights'* tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up, and says he must kill the aforesaid merchant, because one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son."—*Table Talk*, May 31, 1830.

The italics are not Coleridge's, but serve to emphasize the fact that we must seek for no deeply hidden moral teaching; the moral is in fact so obvious, as Coleridge averred, that he who runs may read. Although we can reconcile many of the events of the narrative with spiritual truths, it is dangerous and not conducive to an enjoyment of the poem to carry the attempt too far. Let us preserve something at least of the charming inconsequence of the *Arabian Nights*, such as the condign punishment and ruthless slaying of the crew because the Mariner had killed a bird! It does not measurably improve the beauty of the poem to hold with the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. xiv, that Coleridge desired to establish in *The Ancient Mariner* a system of Christian philosophy, "to present the fall from the innocence of ignorance, from the immediacy of natural faith, and the return, through the medium of sin and doubt, to conscious virtue and belief. . . . 'The ship was cheered'—man commences the voyage of life. 'And now the storm-blast came'—the world, with its buffets, confronts him."

Coleridge never entertained such a poetical heresy as this. His chief concern was to tell a tale of wonder, to break in upon the commonplaceness of our material routine with a voice from the outer world of mystery and dim suggestiveness. And if at times a shaft of spiritual light strikes through the verse, we realize that elsewhere lies the essence of its charm—in the subtle cadence of the diction, the musical fall of the words, the imaginative intensity of the thought, and in that quality of "strangeness added to beauty" which Walter Pater recognized as the distinguishing mark of the romantic temper. The poem is therefore, we repeat, not primarily didactic or even allegoric in character; and, when distinctly moral issues do seem to be involved in the poem, this occurs in pursuance of the poet's purpose to transfer "from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith." It is sufficient for us to know that every poem which subserves the supreme laws of beauty must inevitably bear its tribute to that higher moral law which underlies the beautiful; whereas a poem which should strive to preach morality in defiance of the laws of beauty would miss that nobler aim and thereby fail of its result.

517. *marineres*. So spelled throughout the 1798 edition, and preserved here on account of the rime. Discuss the rimes in this stanza.

529. *The planks look warped*. So written in the 1798 edition, and surely correct. 1817 and all later editions read "looked."

578-590. The motive of these stanzas is evidently derived from the legend of the Wandering Jew. The tradition runs that the latter refused Christ a resting place on his way to the crucifixion, and was therefore doomed to perpetual wandering over the earth, without release by death. He was forced in spite of himself to tell his story, and to preach Christianity even in unwilling ears.

582-585. *Since then, etc.* 1798 edition reads:

“Since then at an uncertain hour,  
Now oft-times and now fewer,  
That anguish comes and makes me tell  
My ghastly adventure.”

612-617. *He prayeth well, etc.* Reference has already been made to the love of animals as a new source of poetry since the time of Burns and Cowper. “In *The Ancient Mariner* are the two great elements of the folk-tale—love of the marvelous, the supernatural, and love of the lower animals. Wonder is the essence of both, and both are of the essence of religion. True to the world’s heart is the recognition of something *real* above and beyond the *actual* in life; equally true is the reverent awe with which primitive men regarded the migrations and strange instincts of birds and beasts.”—E. Charlton Black.

Discuss the general question of a moralistic or allegoric intention in the poem.



## ADDITIONAL POEMS



## ODE ON THE DEPARTING YEAR \*

Ἰὸν, ἰὸν, ὦ ὦ κακὰ.  
Ἵπ' αὖ μὲ δεινὸς ὀρδομαντείας πόνος  
Στροβεῖ, ταράσσειν φροῖμοις ἐφημίοις.  
Τὸ μέλλον ἔξει. Καὶ σὺ μ' ἐν τάχει παρὼν  
Ἀγῶν γ' ἀληθόμαντιν οἰκτεῖρας ἐρεῖς.  
*Æschyl. Agam., 1225.*

### ARGUMENT

The Ode commences with an address to the Divine Providence, that regulates into one vast harmony all the events of time, however calamitous some of them may appear to mortals. The second Strophe calls on men to suspend their private joys and sorrows, and devote them for a while to the cause of human nature in general. The first Epode speaks of the Empress of Russia, who died of an apoplexy on the 17th of November, 1796; having just concluded a subsidiary treaty with the Kings combined against France. The first and second Antistrophe describe the Image of the Departing Year, etc., as in a vision. The second Epode prophesies, in anguish of spirit, the downfall of this country.

### I

SPIRIT who sweetest the wild harp of Time!  
It is most hard, with an untroubled ear  
Thy dark inwoven harmonies to hear!  
Yet, mine eye fixed on Heaven's unchanging clime,  
Long had I listened free from mortal fear,  
With inward stillness and submitted mind;  
When lo! its folds far waving on the wind,  
I saw the train of the departing Year!

---

\* This Ode was composed on the 24th, 25th, and 26th days of December, 1796: and was first published on the last day of that year.

Starting from my silent sadness  
Then with no unholy madness  
Ere yet the entered cloud foreclosed my sight,  
I raised the impetuous song, and solemnized his flight.

## II

Hither, from the recent tomb,  
From the prison's direr gloom,  
From distemper's midnight anguish ;  
And thence, where poverty doth waste and languish ;  
Or where, his two bright torches blending,  
Love illumines Manhood's maze ;  
Or where o'er cradled infants bending,  
Hope has fixed her wishful gaze ;  
Hither in perplexed dance,  
Ye Woes ! ye young-eyed Joys ! advance !  
By Time's wild harp, and by the hand  
Whose indefatigable sweep  
Raises its fateful strings from sleep,  
I bid you haste, a mixed tumultuous band !  
From every private bower,  
And each domestic hearth,  
Haste for one solemn hour ;  
And with a loud and yet a louder voice,  
O'er Nature struggling in portentous birth,  
Weep and rejoice !  
Still echoes the dread Name that o'er the earth  
Let slip the storm, and woke the brood of Hell :  
And now advance in saintly jubilee  
Justice and Truth ! They too have heard thy spell,  
They too obey thy name, divinest Liberty !

## III

I marked Ambition in his war-array !  
I heard the mailed Monarch's troublous cry—

" Ah ! wherefore does the Northern Conqueress stay !  
Groans not her chariot on its onward way ? "

    Fly, mailed monarch, fly !  
    Stunned by Death's twice mortal mace,  
    No more on Murder's lurid face  
The insatiate hag shall gloat with drunken eye !  
    Manes of the unnumbered slain !  
    Ye that gasped on Warsaw's plain !  
    Ye that erst at Ismail's tower,  
When human ruin choked the streams,  
    Fell in conquest's glutted hour,  
Mid women's shrieks and infants' screams !  
    Spirits of the uncoffined slain,  
    Sudden blasts of triumph swelling,  
    Oft, at night, in misty train,  
    Rush around her narrow dwelling !  
The exterminating fiend is fled !—  
    (Foul her life, and dark her doom)  
Mighty armies of the dead  
    Dance, like death-fires, round her tomb !  
Then with prophetic song relate,  
Each some tyrant-murderer's fate !

## IV

Departing Year ! 'twas on no earthly shore  
    My soul beheld thy vision ! Where alone,  
    Voiceless and stern, before the cloudy throne,  
Aye Memory sits : thy robe inscribed with gore,  
With many an unimaginable groan  
    Thou storied'st thy sad hours ! Silence ensued,  
    Deep silence o'er the ethereal multitude,  
Whose locks with wreaths, whose wreaths with  
    glories shone.  
    Then, his eye wild ardors glancing,  
    From the choired gods advancing,



The Spirit of the Earth made reverence meet,  
And stood up, beautiful, before the cloudy seat.

## V

Throughout the blissful throng,  
Hushed were harp and song :  
Till wheeling round the throne the Lampads seven,  
(The mystic Words of Heaven)  
Permissive signal make :  
The fervent Spirit bowed, then spread his wings and  
spake !  
"Thou in stormy blackness throning  
Love and uncreated Light,  
By the Earth's unsolaced groaning,  
Seize thy terrors, Arm of might !  
By peace with proffer'd insult scared,  
Masked hate and envying scorn !  
By years of havoc yet unborn !  
And Hunger's bosom to the frost-winds bared !  
But chief by Afric's wrongs,  
Strange, horrible, and foul !  
By what deep guilt belongs  
To the deaf Synod, 'full of gifts and lies !'  
By Wealth's insensate laugh ! by Torture's howl !  
Avenger, rise !  
Forever shall the thankless Island scowl,  
Her quiver full, and with unbroken bow ?  
Speak ! from thy storm-black Heaven, O speak aloud !  
And on the darkling foe  
Open thine eye of fire from some uncertain  
cloud !  
O dart the flash ! O rise and deal the blow !  
The Past to thee, to thee the Future cries !  
Hark, how wide Nature joins her groans below !  
Rise, God of Nature ! rise."

## VI

The voice had ceased, the vision fled ;  
Yet still I gasped and reeled with dread.  
And ever, when the dream of night  
Renews the phantom to my sight,  
Cold sweat-drops gather on my limbs ;

My ears throb hot ; my eye-balls start ;  
My brain with horrid tumult swims ;

Wild is the tempest of my heart ;  
And my thick and struggling breath  
Imitates the toil of death !

No stranger agony confounds

The soldier on the war-field spread,  
When all foredone with toil and wounds,

Death-like he dozes among heaps of dead !

(The strife is o'er, the daylight fled,

And the night-wind clamors hoarse !

See ! the starting wretch's head

Lies pillowed on a brother's corse !)

## VII

Not yet enslaved, not wholly vile,

O Albion ! O my mother Isle !

Thy valleys, fair as Eden's bowers,

Glitter green with sunny showers ;

Thy grassy uplands' gentle swells

Echo to the bleat of flocks,

(Those grassy hills, those glittering dells

Proudly ramparted with rocks) ;

And Ocean mid his uproar wild

Speaks safety to his Island child.

Hence for many a fearless age

Has social Quiet loved thy shore ;

Nor ever proud invader's rage

Or sacked thy towers, or stained thy fields with gore.

## VIII

Abandoned of Heaven! mad Avarice thy guide,  
At cowardly distance, yet kindling with pride—  
Mid thy herds and thy corn-fields secure thou hast  
stood,  
And joined the wild yelling of Famine and Blood!  
The nations curse thee. They with eager wondering  
Shall hear Destruction, like a vulture, scream!  
Strange-eyed Destruction! who with many a dream  
Of central fires through nether seas upthundering  
Soothes her fierce solitude; yet as she lies  
By livid fount, or red volcanic stream,  
If ever to her lidless dragon-eyes,  
O Albion! thy predestined ruins rise,  
The fiend-hag on her perilous couch doth leap,  
Muttering distempered triumph in her charmed sleep.

## IX

Away, my soul, away!  
In vain, in vain the birds of warning sing—  
And hark! I hear the famished brood of prey  
Flap their lank pennons on the groaning wind!  
Away, my soul, away!  
I, unpartaking of the evil thing,  
With daily prayer and daily toil  
Soliciting for food my scanty soil,  
Have wailed my country with a loud Lament.  
Now I recentre my immortal mind  
In the deep sabbath of meek self-content;  
Cleansed from the vaporous passions that bedim  
God's Image, sister of the Seraphim.

## FRANCE: AN ODE

## I

YE Clouds ! that far above me float and pause,  
Whose pathless march no mortal may control !  
Ye Ocean-Waves ! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,  
Yield homage only to eternal laws !  
Ye Woods ! that listen to the night birds' singing,  
Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,  
Save when your own imperious branches swinging,  
Have made a solemn music of the wind !  
Where, like a man beloved of God,  
Through glooms which never woodman trod,  
How oft, pursuing fancies holy,  
My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,  
Inspired, beyond the guess of folly,  
By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound !  
O ye loud Waves ! and O ye Forests high !  
And O ye Clouds that far above me soared !  
Thou rising Sun, thou blue rejoicing Sky !  
Yea, everything that is and will be free !  
Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,  
With what deep worship I have still adored  
The spirit of divinest Liberty.

## II

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared,  
And with that oath, which smote air, earth, and sea,  
Stamped her strong foot and said she would be free,  
Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared !  
With what a joy my lofty gratulation  
Unawed I sang, amid a slavish band :  
And when to whelm the disenchanted nation,  
Like fiends embattled by a wizard's wand,

The Monarchs marched in evil day,  
And Britain joined the dire array;  
Though dear her shores and circling ocean,  
Though many friendships, many youthful loves,  
Had swol'n the patriot emotion,  
And flung a magic light o'er all her hills and groves;  
Yet still my voice, unaltered, sang defeat  
To all that braved the tyrant-quelling lance,  
And shame too long delayed and vain retreat!  
For ne'er, O Liberty! with partial aim  
I dimmed thy light or damped thy holy flame;  
But blessed the pæans of delivered France,  
And hung my head and wept at Britain's name.

## III

"And what," I said, "though Blasphemy's loud  
scream  
With that sweet music of deliverance strove!  
Though all the fierce and drunken passions wove  
A dance more wild than e'er was maniac's dream!  
Ye storms, that round the dawning east assembled,  
The Sun was rising, though ye hid his light!"  
And when, to soothe my soul, that hoped and  
trembled,  
The dissonance ceased, and all seemed calm and  
bright;  
When France her front deep-scarr'd and gory  
Concealed with clustering wreaths of glory;  
When, insupportably advancing,  
Her arm made mockery of the warrior's ramp;  
While timid looks of fury glancing,  
Domestic treason, crushed beneath her fatal stamp,  
Writhed like a wounded dragon in his gore;  
Then I reproached my fears that would not flee;  
"And soon," I said, "shall Wisdom teach her lore

In the low huts of them that toil and groan !  
And, conquering by her happiness alone,  
Shall France compel the nations to be free,  
Till Love and Joy look round, and call the Earth  
their own."

## IV

Forgive me, Freedom ! O forgive those dreams !  
I hear thy voice, I hear thy loud lament,  
From Bleak Helvetia's icy caverns sent—  
I hear thy groans upon her blood-stained streams !  
Heroes, that for your peaceful country perished,  
And ye that, fleeing, spot your mountain-snows  
With bleeding wounds ; forgive me, that I cherished  
One thought that ever blessed your cruel foes !  
To scatter rage, and traitorous guilt,  
Where Peace her jealous home had built ;  
A patriot race to disinherit  
Of all that made their stormy wilds so dear ;  
And with inexpiable spirit  
To taint the bloodless freedom of the mountaineer—  
O France, that mockest Heaven, adulterous, blind,  
And patriot only in pernicious toils !  
Are these thy boasts, Champion of humankind ?  
To mix with Kings in the low lust of sway,  
Yell in the hunt, and share the murderous prey ;  
To insult the shrine of Liberty with spoils  
From freemen torn ; to tempt and to betray ?

## V

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,  
Slaves by their own compulsion ! In mad game  
They burst their manacles and wear the name  
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain !  
O Liberty ! with profitless endeavor  
Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour ;

But thou nor swell'st the victor's strain, nor ever  
 Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power.  
 Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee  
 (Nor prayer, nor boastful name delays thee),  
 Alike from Priestcraft's harpy minions,  
 And factious Blasphemy's obscener slaves,  
 Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,  
 The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the  
 waves !  
 And there I felt thee !—on that sea-cliff's verge,  
 Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze above,  
 Had made one murmur with the distant surge !  
 Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,  
 And shot my being through earth, sea, and air,  
 Possessing all things with intensest love,  
 O Liberty ! my spirit felt thee there.

*February, 1797.*

### DEJECTION: AN ODE

Written April 4, 1802.

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,  
 With the old Moon in her arms ;  
 And I fear, I fear, my Master dear !  
 We shall have a deadly storm.  
*Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence.*

#### I

WELL ! If the Bard was weather-wise who made  
 The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,  
 This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence  
 Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade  
 Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,  
 Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes

Upon the strings of this Eolian lute,  
Which better far were mute.  
For lo! the new Moon winter-bright!  
And overspread with phantom light,  
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread  
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread,) I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling  
The coming on of rain and squally blast.  
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,  
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!  
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst  
they awed,  
And sent my soul abroad,  
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,  
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and  
live!

## II

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,  
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,  
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,  
In word, or sigh, or tear—  
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,  
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,  
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,  
Have I been gazing on the western sky,  
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:  
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!  
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,  
That give away their motion to the stars;  
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,  
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:  
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew  
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;  
I see them all so excellently fair,  
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!



## III

My genial spirits fail ;  
And what can these avail  
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast ?  
It were a vain endeavor,  
Though I should gaze forever  
On that green light that lingers in the west :  
I may not hope from outward forms to win  
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

## IV

O Lady ! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live :  
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud !  
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,  
Than that inanimate cold world allowed  
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,  
Ah ! from the soul itself must issue forth,  
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud  
Enveloping the Earth—  
And from the soul itself must there be sent  
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,  
Of all sweet sounds the life and element !

## V

O pure of heart ! thou need'st not ask of me  
What this strong music in the soul may be !  
What, and wherein it doth exist,  
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,  
This beautiful and beauty-making power.  
Joy, virtuous Lady ! Joy that ne'er was given,  
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,  
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,  
Joy, Lady ! is the spirit and the power,  
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower,

A new Earth and new Heaven,  
 Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—  
 Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—  
     We in ourselves rejoice!  
 And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,  
     All melodies the echoes of that voice,  
 All colors a suffusion from that light.

VI

There was a time when, though my path was rough,  
     This joy within me dallied with distress,  
 And all misfortunes were but as the stuff  
     Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:  
 For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,  
 And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.  
 But now afflictions bow me down to earth:  
 Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth,  
     But oh! each visitation  
 Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,  
     My shaping spirit of Imagination.  
 For not to think of what I needs must feel,  
     But to be still and patient, all I can;  
 And haply by abstruse research to steal  
     From my own nature all the natural man—  
 This was my sole resource, my only plan:  
 Till that which suits a part infects the whole,  
 And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

VII

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,  
     Reality's dark dream!  
 I turn from you, and listen to the wind,  
     Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream  
 Of agony by torture lengthened out  
 That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,

Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,  
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,  
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,  
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,  
Mad Lutanist ! who in this month of showers,  
Of dark brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,  
Mak'st Devils' yule, with worse than wintry song,  
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.  
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds !  
Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold !

What tell'st thou now about ?

'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,  
With groans of trampled men, with smarting  
wounds—  
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the  
cold !

But hush ! there is a pause of deepest silence !

And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,  
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—  
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud !

A tale of less affright,  
And tempered with delight,  
As Otway's self had framed the tender lay,  
'Tis of a little child  
Upon a lonesome wild,  
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way :  
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,  
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother  
hear.

#### VIII

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep :  
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep !  
Visit her, gentle Sleep ! with wings of healing,  
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,  
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,

Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth !  
With light heart may she rise,  
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,  
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice ;  
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,  
Their life the eddying of her living soul !  
O simple spirit, guided from above,  
Dear Lady ! friend devoutest of my choice,  
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

---

## KUBLA KHAN

IN Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree :  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round :  
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree ;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.  
  
But oh ! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover !  
A savage place ! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover !  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,  
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced :  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail :  
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.  
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean ·  
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war !

The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
·Floated midway on the waves ;  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice !

A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw :  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !  
And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair !  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

## YOUTH AND AGE

VERSE, a breeze 'mid blossoms straying,  
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee—  
Both were mine! Life went a-maying  
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,  
When I was young!

*When I was young?—Ah, woful When!*  
*Ah! for the change 'twixt Now and Then!*  
This breathing house not built with hands,  
This body that does me grievous wrong,  
O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands,  
How lightly *then* it flashed along:—  
Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,  
On winding lakes and rivers wide,  
That ask no aid of sail or oar,  
That fear no spite of wind or tide!  
Nought cared this body for wind or weather,  
When Youth and I lived in't together.

Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;  
Friendship is a sheltering tree;  
O! the joys, that came down shower-like,  
Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,  
Ere I was old!

*Ere I was old? Ah woful Ere,*  
Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!  
O Youth! for years so many and sweet,  
'Tis known, that Thou and I were one,  
I'll think it but a fond conceit—  
It cannot be that Thou art gone!  
Thy vesper bell hath not yet toll'd:  
And thou wert aye a masker bold!

Dewdrops are the gems of morning,  
But the tears of mournful eve !  
Where no hope is, life's a warning  
That only serves to make us grieve,  
                        When we are old :  
That only serves to make us grieve  
With oft and tedious taking leave,  
Like some poor nigh-related guest,  
That may not rudely be dismiss ;  
Yet hath outstay'd his welcome while,  
And tells the jest without the smile.'

1823-1832.

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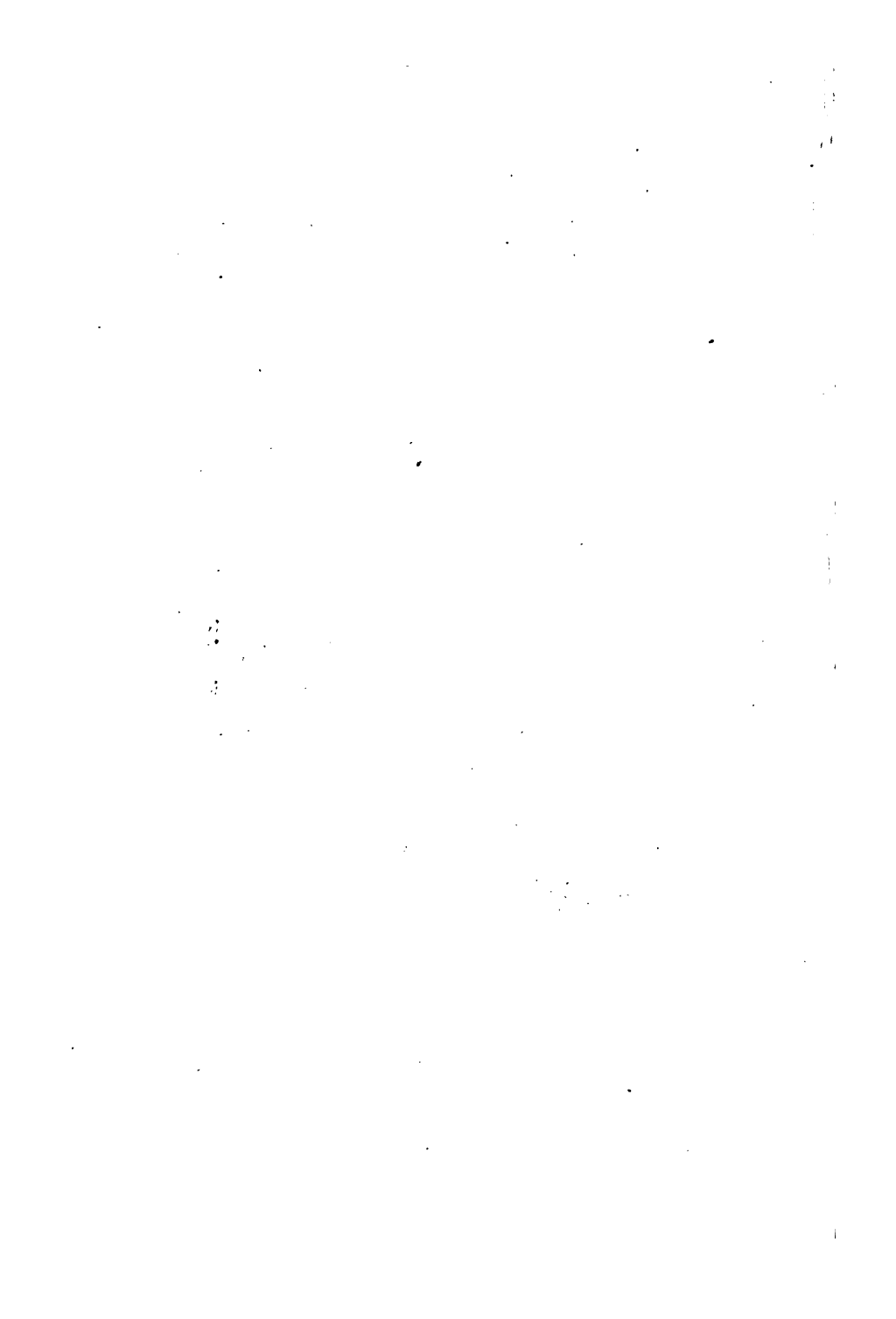
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